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T W E L V E

DISCOURSES

Upon TEXTS of

HOLY SCRIPTURE.

To which is added

A RURAL HYMN in the LATIN
TONGUE.

3 Lg

By THOMAS RINGER, M. A.

K

—As of sincerity, as of God, in the fight of
God— 2 Cor. ii. 17.

Faith without Works is dead. James ii. 20.

L O N D O N :

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25



1865 St. Paul's Church, 1865.

TO THE READER.

NOT thinking it my Duty to be unactive and wholly unserviceable in the Profession to which I have devoted my self, I determined to commit the following Discourses to the Press; which I was the more encouraged to do upon consideration, that Different Readers are taken with different manners of Writing, and because here be many momentous Truths in a little compass, which unite
A 2 their

iv To the READER.

their force and illustrate one another. I readily and thankfully acknowledge, that I am obliged to the Labours of those, who are abundantly my Superiors (They are more so than I know how to express) for the instruction that I have received from them; and on the other hand I lay claim to an honest industry in my Calling. But above all my acknowledgments are due to the Great Dr. Sherlock, deceased, whose Practical Discourse concerning Death hath been my pattern in my Tenth and Eleventh; or rather I do not say that I have imitated this excel-

To the READER. V

excellent Person, but that I have endeavoured to imitate him, as far as my poor ability would give leave. I am very sensible of my own defects, and here offer to the Publick not such a Present as I could wish, but the best Present which (at this time at least) I am able to make. And since it is well intended, I hope the Blessing of God will go along with it, that it may be useful. I hope my Undertaking will not be unacceptable to them that love God, and have the interest of Religion and Virtue at heart, and are well affected towards the King's most Excellent

vi To the READER.

cellent Majesty, and towards
Those who have the Honour
to be employed under him.
If any one receives benefit
from what I have done, I
would entreat him to remem-
ber me in his Prayers, that I
may so pass thro' things Tem-
poral, that I may not after I
have preached unto others,
be my self a Cast-away.
Heartily wishing the Rea-
der's Welfare and true Hap-
piness, I make bold to sub-
scribe my self

His faithful Servant,

Wymondley,
May 15. 1734.

THO. RINGER.

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SERMON

SERMON I.

Pſalm the 33d and the latter part of
the 5th Verſe.

The Earth is full of the
Goodneſs of the Lord.

THE Goodneſs of God is a
Subject, which tranſcends
the Ability of the Hiſheſt
Angel. The Hiſheſt Order of Crea-
ted Beings is certainly very Excel-
lent and Glorious; far beyond any
thing, we who are militant here on
Earth, can poſſibly imagine or Con-
ceive. Nevertheless the Hiſheſt An-
gel of Them all cannot celebrate the
Goodneſs of God in a manner that
is adequate to the Dignity and Gran-
deur of it: He would find himſelf
overpower'd and Unequal to his Un-
dertaking, if he were minded to ex-
hauſt this infinite Theme. For who
can

^a can utter the Mighty Acts of the Lord? who can shew forth All his Praise? There is ^b no end of his Greatness. If then this Task is too great for the Holy Angels, we may be sure the performance of it is not to be expected from Man, who in Knowledge and Intellect is far inferior to those Blessed Spirits: We may be sure it is utterly impossible, the Wisest Man alive should celebrate God's Goodness in such a manner as the Subject deserves; his Endeavours would be extremely imperfect, his Omissions would necessarily be infinitely great.

But although the Wisest Man, and, which is far more, although the Highest Angel cannot equal this Subject, yet on the other hand no rational Creature is so mean, but he is permitted, and not only permitted, but he is positively Commanded to Meditate thereon, according

^a Psal. cvi. 2.

^b Psal. cxlv. 3.

to the faculties which God hath given him. For if there be a ^a willing mind, it is accepted according to that which a Man hath, and not according to that which he hath not. But if a Man will not use that Talent of Understanding, which God hath given him, in Considering the Works of his Maker, he refuses to pay a Natural Tribute and piece of Gratitude which is due from every Rational Creature to the Deity, and rejects the means of improving and Ennobling himself, and despises the Knowledge of God. The Holy Psalmist therefore with great Warmth enjoins us to give ^b Thanks unto the Lord, for He is Good! for his Mercy endureth for ever! And another Inspired Author gives us a Precept of the same kind in these words, ^c Remember thy Creator in the days of thy Youth. The meaning of which Text is this, That we

^a 2 Cor. viii. 12. ^b Psal. cxxxvi. 1. ^c Eccles. xii. 1.

ought to Contemplate the Divine Works, and have a Sense of God and Religion upon our Minds, and practise Righteousness and Virtue, not only when we are stricken in years, when the World and the Blandishments of it have forsaken us, and death and judgment are at the door; but in the Morning and Noon as well as the Evening of Life. To be Religious is the bounden and indispensable Duty of Youth, but the neglect of it is still more insufferable in Aged persons, who with ^aBarzillai no longer relish life, and may be sure the time of their departure is at hand. Our Youth ought to abound, but our latter days ought to abound still more in Goodness and religious Wisdom. Therefore it concerns us all (whether Old or Young) to Remember our Creator and to consider his glorious Goodness and the operation of His hands. This is

^a 2 Sam. xix. 34, 35.

no ordinary Duty, but one of the Higheſt Rank and of Primary Note, and to which we muſt pay an Eſpecial regard and diligence. This is that very Duty, which had the honour to occaſion the original Inſtitution of the Sabbath; neither was the importance of it at all diminiſhed, much leſs was it wholly taken away by the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel; but on the contrary it was increaſed. The Jews had undoubtedly high reaſon to be Thankful to their Great Creator, but Chriſtians have not leſs reaſon, but have more than they had. As it is therefore a Principal Duty to Conſider the Goodneſs of the Lord; ſo on the other hand what can be a more Noble Employ? what Argument more beneficial to us, and productive of all that is good? How Comfortable is it! How Pleaſant, and Various, and Delightful!

In treating of this high subject, the Goodness of our Almighty Creator, I will produce such Instances, as most readily occur to me; that every Reasonable Man, that hears me, may confess with the Holy Psalmist, that the Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord.

Great numbers of Instances immediately present themselves, if a Man but opens his Eyes and makes use of his Reason. It may not be amiss to take notice in the first place of the immense Extent of the Universe, which when we consider, it is natural to fall into Milton's thought.

It speaks

* The Maker's High Magnificence,
who built
So Spacious, and his Line stretcht
out so far,
That Man may know, he dwells not
in his Own.

* Book viii. v. 101.

If

If on the other hand we consider the great beauties of the Universe, we have no reason at all to wonder that the World in Greek is called *Cosmos*, and in Latin *Mundus*, both which words imply Elegance or Beauty. This shews the Natural Sentiments of Mankind in the earliest Times: Reason, however Rude and Uncultivated it might be, could not but admire the manifest Harmony, which appears in the Creation. For over our heads it hath pleased Him to form the Bright Arch of the Sky, and beneath our feet He hath spread the Earth as with a Green Carpet to be a beautiful Habitation for us. He hath created the Sun, the Lamp of Heaven! and gives us Light and Warmth: And how inestimable, how useful are they to the World! Without them it would be one intire Scene of Desolation and Horreur; which is now peopled with innumerable Inhabitants, that

enjoy so many pleasures of Life by means of the Agreeable Light of the Sun. He hath also created the Moon and Stars, and set them in comely array to be as a Supplemental Light to the World, and to beautify and adorn the Night. He hath given us the Day to enjoy Life and to transact affairs; and Night to recruit and refresh our Spirits. He hath made a beautiful Variety of Seasons, the Spring, the Summer, the Autumn, and the Winter; of which even Winter, though inferiour to the rest and sufficiently good for Disobedient Mankind, produces however new beauties of its own, and also recommends the other parts of the Year. He hath given us the element of the Air to Breath in; which is purified by the Winds, that it may not stagnate and corrupt, and become Unwholsome and Pestilential. The great benefit of the Clouds and Rain is acknowledged

SERMON 9

ed by the Holy Psalmist in these words, ^a Thou waterest the furrows of the Earth, thou sendest rain into the little vallies thereof; thou makest it soft with the drops of rain, and bledest the increase of it. Thou crownest the Year with thy Goodness; and thy Clouds drop Fatness.

Moreover I need not tell You, how Great a Blessing it is to have the Element of Water in such plenty and Abundance. If any one doth not know how to set a right Value upon this Mercy, Lucan may inform him, how it fared with Afranius ^b and the Army under his Command, when Cesar, who was their Enemy, had dextrously hemmed them in near Ilerda in Spain. For being surrounded on very High Ground, they were reduced to the greatest Extremities that can be imagined, for Want of Water; and were all of them at Death's door; so that Cesar gained a

^a Psal. lxxv. 11, 12. ^b Lib. iv. ver. 262, &c.

Complete Victory over them without striking another Blow. The Goodness of God cannot be sufficiently adored, who hath bestowed this Element upon his Creatures with such a Profuse and Liberal Hand: who hath made the Springs of Water to issue forth, and the Rivers, which give drink to all the Beasts of the Field.

If we turn our eyes towards the Soil of the Earth, we see that by the Kindly Influence of the Sun, and the Rains which descend upon it, there arises out of it the Lofty Verdure of the Trees, The Edible and Medicinal Plants and Vegetables, and the Fragrant and Gay Flowers. What need I instance in particular the great Bounties of Nature to Mankind, the most fruitful Grain of Wheat and the product of the Vine? What need I mention Delicious Fruits of every kind? and the Useful Materials which are afforded for Architecture?

S E R M O N. II

And we may further observe, that the Green Herb is not only Beautiful to the Sight, but is likewise exceedingly Beneficial, as being the proper food of the Flocks and Herds.

By means of this Miraculous Fruitfulness of the Ground Human Bodies and innumerable Living Creatures of every Species are Continually formed out of the Earth, and receive Sustenance from it. For the Bodies of Men and Beasts do in effect as truly proceed from the Earth, as the Plants themselves, which we actually see arising out of it. For do not all Living Creatures receive their Growth and Magnitude from their Own or their Parents food? and is not the food of Mankind partly from Vegetables, and partly from the bodies of Creatures which feed upon Vegetables, which Vegetables grow out of the Earth? Therefore that we are taken out of the Ground, is in effect Literally true of all Men
Living.

Living. Dust we are, and to the Dust we shall return. For as the Wise Man hath observed in the Book of Ecclesiastes, ^a All are out of the Dust, and All turn to Dust again. ^b The Dust (at the time of Death) shall return to the earth as it was, and the Spirit shall return unto God, who gave it.

Since therefore Human Bodies, and innumerable Living Creatures of every Species, are Continually formed out of the Earth, and receive Sustenance from it; And since the Vegetable part of the Creation is both so extremely Serviceable and Beautiful; How Stupendous in the mean time, how Complete, Absolute and Unlimited are the Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God! Alas! how strangely may Mankind degenerate, if they choose to do so! how thoughtless and insensible may they be! there are ten thousand Miracles

^a Eccles. iii. 20.

^b Eccles. xii. 7.

before

before our Eyes every day, but we consider them not; though they are all of them the effects of a Contrivance and Power infinitely superiour to those of Man. Man's Understanding cannot confer Life; nor preserve him from the Hated Dominion of death, which he no more knows how to avoid than the very Beasts, which breath the same Air, and die like him. Man's Understanding falls infinitely short, and becomes less than nothing, if opposed to the Supreme Intellect, which Made and Governs the World: It is He that made us, and not we our selves: It is most certain, that we were not the Origin of our own Existence, but were brought into Being by some other Agent more Able and more Wise than Man: We derive our Being from the Good Will and pleasure of our Divine Creator; Whose Goodness and other Attributes are

Pfal. c. 3.

abundantly

abundantly Conspicuous in the inconceivable Multitudes of Living Creatures which inhabit this Globe.

It would be endless to speak of every Species; for which reason I pass over in the first place the Wonders of the Ocean, whose Salt Waters are replenished with innumerable Living Creatures of divers Kinds, and whose Surface is inhabited to a considerable degree by Man. I likewise pass over the Feathered Race and the Fowls of the Air. However I cannot but make this brief Remark, that the Great Creator's Power is by no means confined to any single Method, but is Unbounded and Unlimited, and displays itself in Several and manifold Appearances: He confers Life and Motion (as it seems good to His infinite Wisdom) upon the Land, and in the Air, and beneath the Fresh and the Salt Waters. In short I shall pass over every kind of Animals except Man,
con-

concerning whom You shall hear some Observations, seeing he is by far the most Eminent of them all.

How can we ever render due Thanks and Glory unto God, who hath created the Rational Soul of Man, and dignified Human Nature with the most Surprising Faculties of Understanding, Imagination, and Memory! How wonderful are the distinct and numerous Treasures of the Memory, and how wonderful also are the Lively Scenes of the Imagination! These two Faculties represent the Objects of them in such a manner as if they were actually present, though they are at ever so great a distance of Time or Place: The Memory enables a Man to exercise his Understanding upon past Occurrences; and the Imagination enables him to exercise it upon things Remote, to which he never had access, and upon things Possible or Future: Otherwise Man's Understanding
would

would necessarily have been very scanty and narrow, if he had only been able to make use of it upon things Present and before his eyes. But now we find, that God hath graciously ordered it much otherwise: For what a noble share of Understanding is to be found among Mankind! How mightily doth Man excell his Fellow-Creatures in this respect! How wide a Distance is there placed between Him and them! From this Faculty of Divine and Heavenly extract proceed all Wise institutions relating to Society and Government. From hence also arise all kinds of Learning, and for instance Geometry, and its kindred Science Astronomy, whereby Men are taught to measure the Motions of the Planets: for this Power of the Soul, the Understanding, extends even to the Spacious distance of the Ether, and rectifies the informations of the Bodily Senses. From it do
arise

arise also all Useful Arts and Occupations, such as Agriculture and Commerce, Architecture and Navigation; for Men are hereby enabled also to pass over the Wide Waters of the Ocean. In a word, all the Numberless and Admirable Inventions, which have been made for the Service of Man, are owing to the Power of Understanding, which his Good and Wise Maker hath bestowed upon him. The last Advantage of it, which I shall mention, is indeed extremely Great: it is this: that we are hereby made capable of Religion and Virtue; which are the excellencies, wherein the very highest Perfection of our Nature consists! These are the inestimable Privileges and the Noblest Endowments of Humanity, namely, that we are enabled to know God, to know our heavenly Father; and are permitted to give Him that Title, and to adore Him; and are enabled to Contemplate His Glorious Works

C

and

and His Divine Attributes; and to practise Prudence and Industry, Temperance and Chastity, Righteousness and Mercy, and all other Virtues from a Principle of Obedience and Duty towards God. But after all I would not be thought to extoll Human Intellect as if it were Absolute and Perfect; God knows it is very far from it; For the Best Men living are not in God's stead, neither are they Angels, but they are mortal Men in a State of Trial and Probation: However that portion of Understanding, which it hath pleased Him to assign Mankind, is in it self very Considerable and great; though it must not dare to compare it self with the Intellect of Beings exceedingly Superiour, and much less with the Infinite and Consummate Wisdom of the Deity!

No body can be ignorant of the marvellous Activity and Swift Transition of Man's Thought; and its
deep

deep penetration may be known from what hath been said of him already. But it seems not amiss to add a Word or two concerning the Natural Passions of the Soul. The Passions may be compared to the Elements of Fire and Water, which are excellent Servants, and so necessary that there is no living without them; Nevertheless the same Elements are most pernicious and Destructive if they get the Mastery over us: In like manner the Passions create a world of Mischief, if they are Exorbitant and Unruly; but they are of great Use and service to us, when regulated and Conducted by Reason, as they ought to be. Without them Man would be a very Unactive, indolent, and worthless Creature, who now by means of them is excited to perform the Duties, which belong to him, with Spirit, pleasure and alacrity. Our Passions therefore were given us by our Gracious Ma-

ker for good and wise purposes. However we must have a Special Care (for this is the Trial we are put to, this is our Duty, and the Exercise of our Understanding) to turn the Passions the Right way, and to keep them within bounds and under Government, that they may not be like Furious Horses, that run riot, and command their Master instead of being Commanded by him, and therefore commit fatal Disorders and Wild Mischief.

Happy therefore are all they, who have learned not to Extinguish (as the Stoic Philosophers did vainly teach and pretend) but to Govern their Passions, and by so doing to preserve and maintain the Dignity of their Nature! For the Soul of Man is so Excellent a Being, that, when it is adorned with Virtue and with Wisdom, it is indisputably the very Best Image and Likeness of God, that is to be met
with

with (though invisible it self) in the Visible World.

And we find accordingly, that Mankind are actually invested with Sovereignty and Power over all things in this Spacious and Well-furnished Earth. For as the Psalmist observes, ^a Thou makest them to have Dominion over the Works of Thy Hands, and Thou hast put all things in subjection under their feet; All Sheep and Oxen, and the Beasts of the Field, the Fowls of the Air, and the Fishes of the Sea. And as it is ^b affirmed in Genesis, Into their hands all things are delivered, and the living Creatures are meat for them even as the green herb. Now this is a manifest indication, how much Human Nature is advanced above the rest of the Creatures; and Consequently of God's Love and Goodness to us; Forasmuch as the chief parts of the Terrestrial System

^a Psal. viii. 6, 7, 8.

^b Gen. ix. 2, 3.

have an ultimate reference to Man, principally at least, though perhaps not entirely. For the use of Man the Rain descends from Heaven, and the Clouds drop Fatness; for him the Fields laugh and sing, and are (in due season) richly cloathed with Wheat; and even the living Creatures live and breath for his use, and for his sake they were Created: I do not mean for the sake of any single Man, but for the sake of the Whole Species ever since the beginning of the World. Thus Dominion is given to Man over the rest of the Creatures.

Wherefore with reference to the Body, God hath given him an Erect Posture of Body (as being most suitable to an Understanding Creature) and withal a Natural kind of Majesty which results from thence. He hath elevated his Looks in order to elevate his Mind. Whereas the Eyes of other Animals are turned towards the Earth, He hath raised
the

the Human Face towards the Expanse of Heaven, that he might survey the Creation, and learn to admire the Almighty Creator from His Glorious Works.

Another Eminent Privilege which is conferred upon Man, is the Gift of an Articulate Voice and Language, which no other Creature under Heaven hath besides. The Tongue and the Hand (both which are of peculiar Use to the Human Species) are Signal instances of God's Goodness to us. Neither is the use of the Pen the least of the Numerous Services which are performed by that Excellent Instrument, the Hand. Various are its Uses! Great are the Thanks and Admiration due to its Divine Maker! Shall I take notice of the Five Senses, which are common to Mankind with other Animals? And shall I speak of the Eye and Ear? Or of another of His Benefits, the Foot, and the Conveni-

ent and ready conveyance, which it performs, from place to place? The great excellence and usefulness of all these Parts of the Body are Obvious and Evident to the Meanest Capacities: If not; let them consider, how it would be with them, if they should lose any one of these, and how much they would give to be possessed of it again! For Example, if it were not for those Great instances of Mercy, the Sight and the Hearing, would not the Soul be in a manner Buried in its own Body? Who can sufficiently admire these things? How Wise is the Contrivance of them! How Excellent are their Uses! How visible is the Hand of God in these His Works!

Moreover to leave Wicked and Atheistical Men without excuse, He hath given the Soul power over some parts of the Body, and none at all over the rest: that nothing but stubbornness and Obstinacy might hinder

der Men from being sensible either of His Beneficence, or of their Dependence upon Him. He hath therefore given the Soul power to command several Motions, and particularly those of the Hand and Foot: but other Motions in the Body, as for instance the Operations of the Heart and Stomach, are exempt from the Soul's jurisdiction, and ruled by the Almighty power, that daily sustains us.

To proceed, it is not for me to pretend to treat of the Curious and Noble Structure of the Heart, and the Lungs, or the Diaphragm, or Brain. From the Beginning of the World to this Day Man hath not been able to trace and discover all the Miracles of Divine Wisdom, which are constantly wrought in the Preservation of this Inferiour World, and in the Fabrick of every individual living Body! Nor will he ever be able to enumerate them all, if he

he employs his Reason ever so much. Much less can he pretend to imitate them. How stupid therefore and senseless, how partially fond of his Lusts and Vices is that person, who allows Mankind to have a degree of Knowledge and Power, and at the same time cannot see infinitely Superior Wisdom and Goodness in the Works of Nature! Every blade of Grass intimates them to us, Every Man's Self is a thorough Demonstration to him, if he is but willing to consider it. If we contemplate the World, we find there is a Concurrence of innumerable Wise Designs in the Structure of it: If we reflect upon its epitome, the Human Frame, the case is the same there; Every part, every limb of it is wonderful, but the Composition of the Whole is still more to be admired.

Since therefore the Attributes of the Deity are evidently stamped
4 upon

upon this Inferiour World and upon mortal Man, what must we think of the Eldest Sons of the Creation, the Holy Angels and Saints in Glory? who tread His Courts, who enjoy the Beatific Presence, who are his chiefest Ministers, and excell in Dignity and Happiness! And how blessed an Inheritance hath God reserved for those that Love and Obey Him, when it shall please Him to reward their Virtue, and to remove them hence unto His heavenly Kingdom!

To the end that This in His own good time may be the portion of us all, God of his infinite Mercy give us grace, that we may all have a Christian Knowledge of the Lord our God; and revere, honour, and serve Him Faithfully, and pay Obedience to his Righteous Laws all the days of our Life.

Now

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invifible, the only Wife God, be honour and Glory for ever and ever. Amen.



SERMON

SERMON II.

The 6th Chapter of the Prophet
Micah, and the 8th Verse.

He hath shewed thee, O
Man, what is good: And
what doth the Lord re-
quire of thee, but to do
Justly, and to love Mer-
cy, and to walk Humbly
with thy God?

IN the Verses, which precede
the Text, there is such a Ques-
tion started, as would natural-
ly proceed from the mouth of a
person that was engaged in conver-
sation with the Prophet, and desired
to be instructed in the knowledge
of his Duty. The Question propo-
sed is to this effect.

What

30 The SECOND

What must I do to propitiate the tremendous Majesty of Heaven and Earth? What must I do to obtain His favour, and to be entitled to that Protection and Happiness, which are the sure Rewards of Those that please Him? Shall I consume all my Substance, be it ever so large and plentiful, in Burnt-Offerings? Or is any thing upon Earth so Dear and precious to me, that I may hope it will be accepted by Him?

In return to these Queries there is an excellent and truly heavenly answer given in the words of the Text, for the satisfaction of every well-disposed person, who desires to know what kind of Homage he ought to pay to the Most High God: for He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good; And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do Justly, and to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

In

In treating of this place of Sacred Scripture it is my design to pursue the following method.

First, I shall observe to You how brightly God's Goodness shines forth in the Commandments which He hath given to Mankind, and in the terms of Salvation, which He offers us. For what doth the Lord require of thee, O Man?

Secondly, I shall observe what inexcusable and desperate guilt Disobedient and Wicked men contract, Since they actually know what God's Will is, or easily may. For He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good.

Thirdly and Lastly, I shall endeavour to make appear, wherein true Religion doth principally consist; Namely, in doing the thing that is Just, and loving Mercy, and walking humbly with our God.

However the present Discourse must be content to enlarge only upon the two first of these general Heads;

32 The SECOND

Heads; reserving the Other as sufficient for the Meditation of another Day.

First therefore I am to observe to You how brightly God's Goodness shines forth in the Commandments which He hath given to Mankind, and in the terms of Salvation which He offers us.

I think it here necessary to take notice, that the words of the Text are to be understood, as spoken in a Prophetic Spirit concerning the Christian Religion, and not concerning That, which God was pleased to institute among the Ancient Jews. For it is well known, that the Jewish Law was suited to the disposition of an Obstinate and stiff-necked people, and was therefore embarrassed with many Rites and Ceremonies, which were so far of use as they continually represented what should befall the Messiah; and were a Type and Shadow of
 4. better

better things to come, and carried a faint resemblance of that more Glorious and perfect Revelation, which should be made by Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. For if I may be permitted to make use of a Comparison upon this occasion, Like as when a Fine piece of Building is finished, the Scaffolding, which was used in erecting of it, is then taken down as being no longer serviceable and much less ornamental to the Structure: In like manner, when the Dispensation of the Gospel took place, the Jewish Rites and Ceremonies were abolished and superseded. The Words therefore of the Text, "And what doth the Lord require of thee, O Man," have only a distant Relation to the Law of Moses, and are no where fully and completely verified but in the Religion of the Blessed Jesus; the Rise of which, and its rapid conquest of the World, the Prophet Micah foresaw,

D being

enlightned by the Holy Ghost, who was now hastening forwards the Dawning of the Gospel.

Now then let us contemplate the Goodness of our Divine Legislator to all Christian people, and view the heavenly Beauties of His Law, which is perfect like its Maker. For behold how beautiful is the Creation, even the meanest part of it, which is visible to us Mortals! Nevertheless it is very certain, that the Terrestrial System, though its Lustre and Symmetry are ineffably great, is however far exceeded by the superiour Excellence and Harmony of God's Law; as the Royal Prophet takes particular notice in the Nineteenth Psalm, in which he celebrates the One, but gives the due preference to the Other. And the Reason is plain; Because the Law of God is absolutely Perfect, even as He himself is infinitely Righteous; but this inferiour Part of the
Crea-

Creation enjoys only a limited Excellence.

The Precepts, which He hath given us, are infinitely Right and Good; and there is nothing in them but what tends to promote the Welfare and Happiness of Mankind even here upon Earth. Infomuch that he who refuses to conform his life to them, is in reality a Publick Pest, and Enemy to all Society; and deserves to be excluded from the Benefit of it, and to Converse only with Beasts of prey, that are rapacious and full of Mischief like himself.

God's felicity is infinitely great, and is neither capable of Increase or Diminution: He can have no sinister ends to serve in His dealings with Mankind, but esteems the happiness of the Universe to be His greatest Honour, and therefore makes it the Sole end of all His actions and of the Commandments, which He gives us.

Even the Temporal Interest of every Man obliges him to the practice of the Laws of God and of Virtue; for ^a her Ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all her Paths are Peace. For besides the great Satisfaction of a Good Conscience, which fills the Mind with Chearfulness and Serenity; and besides the protection of Providence, which always accompanies Good Men; True Religion, whatever some people may think, naturally tends to make a Man prosper, and to be beloved; and to the preservation of Health, and the prolonging of Life: and it obtains for him at last a peaceful departure out of this World, in which Men know they must not continue long; and is an invincible Support to the Soul in our dying hour, when Worldly Comfort ceases, and all Temporal Vanities totally disappear like a Dream in the Night, and we

^a Prov. iii. 17.

are encompassed with the Strongest Terrors of Nature. Nevertheless the remembrance of a Good Life will dispell the Gloom even of those dark and dismal Moments, and open to the Soul a Glorious Scene of Immortality. These are the genuine effects of Religion and Virtue upon the interest of Men; and if any of them find it otherwise, the case of a melancholy Constitution being first excepted, I may safely say, that it is because they mistake the true nature of Religion, and embrace Superstition in its stead; or else content themselves with an imperfect Degree, or a hypocritical form and appearance of Godliness without the power of it. Not but that Almighty God doth for Wise and Good reasons many times send severe Trials upon His faithful Servants, as He did upon Righteous Job, in which however He sustains and supports them, and brings them

off in the end more than Conquerors.

In short a Virtuous course of Life is much more likely to make Men happy in This World as well as the Other, than Wickedness and Sin. And there is nothing forbidden by the Law of God, but what a Wise and Considerate Man would desire to be debarred from, and wish to be prohibited: And nothing is enjoined him, but what such a one would voluntarily choose to do. For the Laws of God are founded upon perfect Equity and Wisdom, and are antecedently Good to any Command of His, and were ordained by Him for that very Reason, because they are so. For the Lord is no hard and Severe Task-master: He hath indeed an absolute and Sovereign Right over us, to command us what he pleases; but his Goodness is as Unbounded as his Dominion. Though what we possess and
call

call our Own is in reality His, who is the indisputable Proprietor of all things, yet He hath not commanded us to divest our selves of it, and to give all we have unto the Poor, that all the World might be set upon an equal Level; how plausible an appearance soever such a Command might carry with it. Much less hath He directed us to consume all our Substance in Burnt-Offerings: No: God hath not required of any Man to bring Him his thousands of Rams or ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl; or to sacrifice unto Him the Fruit of his Body for the sin of his Soul, as the deluded Ammonites did to their Idol Moloch, to whose barbarous custom the Context alludes. And though Mankind were in a lapsed State, and were for any thing they themselves could do, utterly lost in Ruin and Wickedness, yet of his Mercy He saved and retrieved us; and hath only prescribed us the

most Gentle Conditions that are possible, and imposes nothing, but what in its own Nature is most equitable and fit for us to do; Upon the performance of which He hath promised us immortal Happiness through Jesus Christ. His Service therefore is perfect Freedom, as the Liturgy of our Church rightly styles it; and He himself is the kindest Master, the most indulgent Parent, and an infinitely Wise and Gracious Legislator. Men are guilty of a very gross Mistake, when they tax Religion as slavish or Unreasonable: If they open the Eyes of their Understanding, they might easily discern, that Vice on the contrary is really so. For by a Vicious course of Life Men blacken their Reputation, ruin their Estates, and murder their Health; and make shipwreck of a Good Conscience, and forfeit the Favour of God. Let me then apply the words of King Solomon, ^a Let not your heart

^a Prov. vii. 25, 27.

heart decline to her Ways, Go not astray in her Paths: For her house is the way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death. Vice is as detestable and destructive, as Virtue is Amiable and Lovely. These things I have spoken at large, in order to shew the Wonderful Goodness of God in the Commandments, which He hath given to Mankind, and in the Terms of Salvation offered us in Christ Jesus.

But before I dismiss this part of my Text, it behoves me to obviate a Mistake which may arise from what hath been said. And this I shall do in a very few words.

Though, as I said just now, God is the Best and Kindest of all Masters, yet let no man be Evil because God is Good, or presume to sin in hopes of obtaining Pardon: for He is only Merciful to such as reverence his Mercy and improve under it; but those who abuse it, will find to their

their cost, that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Men, who in spite of all the means of Grace are still resolved to be Wicked, will rue too late their desperate Obstinacy, when they feel what it is to fall into the hands of incensed Omnipotence: the Severity of whose Justice is strongly expressed by the Prophet * Nahum, as follows; The Lord will take Vengeance on his adversaries, and He reserveth Wrath for his Enemies. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the Rocks are thrown down by Him. So much at present concerning the Divine Justice.

I proceed to the Second thing, which I proposed, namely, to shew how inexcusable disobedient and Wicked Men are, forasmuch as they know what God's Will is, or

* Nahum i. 2, 6,

at least easily may. For He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good.

Notwithstanding the Commands which God lays upon us are so Beneficial to Mankind, and so Right and Reasonable in themselves, as You have already heard, It would nevertheless be a Considerable alleviation of the Guilt, which Men contract by their disobedience, if they were under an invincible ignorance of them. But this plea there is no room for. For God hath made Man an Understanding Soul, able to discern between Good and Evil. And herein consists the distinguishing Superiority of Human Nature: hereby Man excels all other Creatures upon Earth; and is allied to the Blessed Order of the heavenly Angels, from which the Soul of Man differs it may be in perfection rather than in Nature and Essence.

As therefore Man is endued with variety of Knowledge, so there is

no part of it, which is more Certain, or more level to every Man's capacity who will but take any pains at all, than the Theory of Virtue, or (to speak plainer English) the Knowledge of our Duty. For every sense we are endued with, but especially the Divine Gift of Sight, furnishes the Understanding with flagrant proofs of the Existence and Attributes of God, according to St. Paul's way of arguing in his Epistle to the Romans: For as the Apostle there signifies to us, that which may be known of God is manifest even among the Gentiles; for God hath shewed it unto them: For the invisible things of Him from the beginning of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things which He hath made. Romans, chapter the first. If therefore a Man will not Honour, Revere, and Love the Adorable Majesty of Heaven and Earth, he must necessarily be Self-condemned,

condemned, condemned by Human Nature, which he renders himself unworthy of by degenerating from it, and deserves therefore the Sentence of Death.

Forasmuch as Men cannot possibly be ignorant of the Deity, it is certain they ought to perform His Will, and to act by the Rules of Goodness and Wisdom as their heavenly Father doth. They ought therefore to acquit themselves well and decently in the several Relations, in which they stand in the World; and to do those good and kind offices to others, which they themselves would desire to receive in the like case; and to treat no Man with Usages, which they would resent Quickly enough as Unfriendly and injurious, if the Case was their own. No axiom in all Euclid is more Reasonable and evident than these first Principles of Religion are. For the Light of Nature discovers to

us a very considerable part of our Duty. But moreover God hath most expressly declared His Whole Will by our Lord Jesus Christ. The Sun of Righteousness is risen upon us in full Glory, and hath made the Whole Beauty of Holiness to appear: Every Duty is perfectly displayed by our Great Redeemer, every Truth and Doctrine is revealed to us, which may put it fairly in our power who are now upon Earth to vie with the good Examples which the Saints above have left us, and to acquire as high Honours and Rewards as they. For God hath given us the Sacred Scriptures to make us Wise unto Salvation: He hath appointed the Sabbath to be kept holy, that every Man may have time to raise his thoughts to God, to consider himself and his Duty, and to look forwards upon Eternity: His Good Providence hath also instituted different

ferent Orders of Men, I mean the Clergy, whose constant office it is to instruct the Ignorant, and to remind the Wifest. To take up therefore His own words in the Prophet Ifaiah, * What can be done more unto His Vineyard, which He hath not done unto it?

If any Man lives a Wicked Life, it is not for want of Knowing better, but because he holds the Truth in Unrighteousness, that is, because he sins against Knowledge, and commits evil, though he knows it to be so. For he suffers himself to be hurried away with his irregular Lufts and Passions, though at the same time his Conscience tells him, he is doing what he ought not; and audaciously ventures upon crimes, which he would tremble at the thoughts of, if he were upon the point of leaving the World, and going to appear before the Tribunal of God.

* Ifaiah v. 4.

The Result of all is this, that disobedient and Wicked Men are altogether inexcusable, and that we are every way under the greatest Obligations that can be to practise Religion and Virtue.

Now unto God, infinitely Wise, Holy, and Just, be rendred and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion both now and for evermore. Amen.



SERMON III.

The 6th Chapter of the Prophet
Micah, and the 8th Verse.

He hath shewed thee, O
Man, what is good: And
what doth the Lord re-
quire of thee, but to do
Justly, and to love Mer-
cy, and to walk Humbly
with thy God?

THIS Memorable place of
Scripture contains a great
deal of Instruction in few
words, and gives us in a small com-
pass the very Spirit and Essence of
Religion. For here the Prophet
sets forth with the Pomp of Elo-
quence and Beauty of Holiness the
E Virtues

Virtues of Justice, Mercy, and Humility. He takes notice they are taught us by Almighty God, whose instructions we may be sure carry along with them Infinite Authority; and that they are Good in themselves; and are a Compendious Summary of all Religion.

I shall therefore according to Promise take this Opportunity to speak of the Great Excellence of these three Principal Duties, namely, Justice, Mercy, and Humility; and shall discourse of them in the same order, in which they stand in the Text.

First then I ought to display the great excellence of Justice.

The Absolute Necessity of Justice, and the Exceeding great Benefits which flow from it, are Evident from hence, inasmuch as it is the Sacred Band and Cement of Society and Concord among Men. God, having designed Man for Society, as is visible in many respects, hath
made

made him a Creature naturally Weak and Indigent, unable to encounter with various Hardships and Dangers that occur, or to provide for himself things Necessary and Suitable to his Nature. The Consequence of this is, that Mankind finding they cannot live independent of one another with any tolerable Safety, Comfort, or Convenience, Unite among themselves, and fall into Societies, as the God of nature Himself directs and prompts them to do. And from hence arise great and Innumerable advantages to Men, insomuch, that though taken singly they are in a great Degree Helpless and destitute of the means of Self-preservation, yet by Associating together they gain a godlike Power and Dominion over this Earth which they inhabit. And while particular persons contribute the various Talents, God hath distributed among them, to the Good of Socie-

ty, the Community is enriched with all the excellent and useful Inventions, which either the Necessities of Life, or the Ease and Splendor of it require. It appears then how exceedingly Society promotes the Well-being of Mankind, and how miserable and forlorn a State Life would be without it. Now the basis and Support of This Society is Justice; and if that Sacred Virtue were utterly removed out of the World, there would be an end of all Society at once, and all Men would be in a State of War with one another. In proportion as Justice is observed among Men, Society, Love and Happiness flourish among them likewise; but Injuries on the other hand produce Enmity and Scenes of Horror. Men should therefore take care not to be influenced by Self-love only; for there be other things to be considered by Wise and Good Men besides their own private Interest:

terest: for instance there is a great deal due to the Publick Welfare of Mankind, and the Safety of the Body Politic, whereof any Man is a Member. No Man therefore can have any right to Unjust and Licitious Practices, since if all Men took the same Courses, Desolation and Destruction would universally ensue. From hence we see, that Injustice is a sort of treason against the Publick Welfare of Mankind, and an Outrage against the Community in which the Delinquent lives. A Man by being unjust contributes his part towards the Ruin of the World in general, and of his Country in particular; If other Men are better than himself, no thanks to him: for his very Example is contagious, and of very bad Consequence. All Injuries have a Tendency to dissolve Society in some measure, and to beget Animosities and Aversion in the Minds of Men. For to what are all

Wars and Murders owing? and what else is the cause of Quarrels, Feuds and Law-suits, but only Injustice? which is a Capital Sin, and the source of all manner of evil.

Injustice also manifestly includes in the Notion of it a Violation of our Duty to our injured Brother, who undeservedly suffers evil at our hand; for which a Satisfaction is due to him, and will Sooner or Later be required of us.

Moreover Injustice is a most notorious Sin against God. For the Lord hath shewed thee, O Man, that He requires of thee Justice; This both Reason and Revelation teach us in the most express manner: And since Man is endued with Understanding, he ought certainly to live up to the Dignity of this his Nature, and to practise those Duties which God hath made known to him. Both Reason and Revelation jointly declare, that God will assuredly punish those
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Malevolent Destroyers, who in contempt of that Better Knowledge which he hath given them, would deface the Beauty of His Creation, and introduce the utmost Confusion and Discord instead of Harmony and Order. God will abundantly vindicate his Honour, as Governor of the World; He will see that the Innocent and Injured have Right, and that Wickedness and Injustice shall not go Unpunished. The Wicked shall rue their past iniquity, but the Just shall triumph in their Righteousness.

The Second Duty, enjoined us in the Text, is Mercy, in which there is something exquisitely Noble, inasmuch as it is a Copying after the most Divine and Amiable Attribute of the Most High. ^a Be Ye therefore Merciful (says our Saviour) as Your Father is Merciful; Conform your selves to this Blessed Example as much as in You lies; and You

^a Luke vi. 36.

shall take an Unmeasurable flight above the World, and be the Approved Children of God, excelling in Goodness, Dignity and Happiness.

And let us but Consider, how Suitable and apposite Mercy is to the Nature of Man; Surely it ought to be the Darling Virtue of Mankind, because they stand so much in need of it. For all Men are subject to Sins, Sorrows, Calamitous Circumstances, Diseases, and Pain; and are very frequently involved in one or other of them; so easie to be Contemned is Life! And at the end of it Certain Death awaits us, which of itself is enough to extort not only from a Pious and Devout Man, but even from a vicious Infidel till now, a Dying Prayer to this effect, *Entium miserere mei!* O Supreme Being, have Mercy on me!

Since therefore Human Nature is subject to Various Unhappiness and Distress, the Merciful Man compassionate

passionates the Sufferings of Mankind his Brethren, and relieves them according to his Ability, and in proportion as the Duty, which he owes them, is more or less. For it is manifest some Difference and Distinction ought to be made, and that an utter Stranger is not to be set upon a level with a Parent or other Honourable Benefactor; nor hath a dissolute Villain a right to the same good offices, as an Honest and Virtuous Man.

A Good Man is easily touched with generous Sentiments of Pity, even towards his Enemy, and forgives the Injuries he hath received, nor will he give him even a legal Molestation, unless Duty and Justice constrain. He forgets what is past, and only wishes him to grow Wise and Happy. Himself he arms with Innocence and Prudence, and recommends to the Divine Protection.

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The Merciful Man is particularly sensible of the Sorrows of those, with whom he is more nearly engaged, and converses with; He considers the Weight of Trouble they undergo, and kindly overlooks their venial Offences against him, those faults of a lesser nature, which no Man can at all times avoid. In fine, he remembers that he is a Man, and that all the Evils of Life are incident to him, as well as to other Men; He considers his own Miscarriages and Faults, and becomes so much the readier to pardon those of other persons.

If all Men agreed to practise this Duty of Mercy, how would the Miseries of the Human Race be alleviated! We should have a kind of Heaven upon Earth.

Men must be strangely infatuated in their prosperity, if they suffer themselves to be lifted up with Pride, and to be guilty of Cruelty and Wild Extravagances. For no Man knows
what

what will hereafter befall himself; or that his failures in point of Pity, Goodness, and Beneficence may not be retaliated by some body or other; But if not by Man, it is certain they will by Almighty God: For Mercy to Man is the Condition, upon which we are to expect the Mercy of Heaven, which is necessary for us to the last Degree.

This truth is finely represented to us by our Saviour in the eighteenth Chapter of St. Matthew, under the Parable of a King, who called upon his Servants to adjust accounts with him. We have there several things, which well deserve our notice. As first, the Unreasonableness of Mankind; for the Servant would not forgive his fellow an hundred pence, though he expected his Lord should forgive him ten thousand Talents. Secondly the Barbarous inhumanity of Men to one another, and their impenetrable and unrelenting

lenting temper; for the Wicked Servant upon the account of a Debt of an hundred pence took his Fellow by the Throat, and threw him into Prison, Intreaties and Promises notwithstanding. Thirdly, the just Indignation of his Lord thereupon; for He delivered the Unmerciful Servant to the Tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto his Lord. And lastly, Our Saviour's own interpretation of this His Parable, that even so will our Heavenly Father deal with us, unless we shew Mercy to one another.

This Duty of Mercy, which I have been treating of, is in the New Testament comprehended under Christian Charity; Of which there are three principal Branches, First Good Will, or a Gentle and Friendly disposition of Mind towards all Men, inasmuch as they are our Brethren, Partakers of the same Nature, are the Creation and Image of
3 God,

God, and our Fellow-Candidates for Immortality. Secondly, Beneficence, or the doing them Good, as much as lies in our Power. And thirdly, the Forgiveness of Injuries.

But now let us pass on to the last Duty in the Text, namely Humility. That Person may be said to be truly Humble, who hath a Lively sense of his entire Dependance upon God, and takes care to order his Actions and Speech accordingly. From whence we may observe by the way, that a genuine Humility, always implies Faith or Knowledge of God, and proceeds from it. Humility, as far as I have hitherto described it, is part of the Character of the Highest Angel as well as of a Good Man upon Earth. But since Man is not only a Creature, but a Sinner likewise, he must look upon his own infirmities and failings, and remember the Misbehaviours he hath been guilty of, that he may not
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 8 make

make a false Estimate, and think better of himself than he ought to do. This is entirely a Human Motive to Humility; and a most strong one it is: But the other Motive is Angelical and of a nobler kind; however that also equally concerns Men, and is altogether as Obligatory upon them, as upon the Holy Angels; And is indeed of it self a fully sufficient ground for Humility.

Herein then doth chiefly consist the Right Understanding of our selves, In being sensible that we are Creatures, and do in all things depend upon God; That to him we owe our Being, and whatsoever is Praise-worthy in us, and whatsoever Good we enjoy; and to Him alone therefore all the Glory is due. This is true Humility; and this Just and humble Knowledge of ourselves is the foundation of Piety and Thankfulness to God; It is the Sobriety of the Soul, and a preservative

tives against a thousand Vicious and Foolish Actions, and recommends us to the Love and favour both of God and Man.

Thus have I endeavoured to make appear, that Justice, Mercy, and Humility are the Principal parts of Religion; and to shew at the same time Why they are so. But moreover we may here make this further Remark concerning them, that if they are Carefully observed, they will lead us into all the Duties of a Christian Life. As an Index, which is set up in the Road, points out the Traveller's way for him; So if a Man hath an exact Regard to Justice, Mercy, and Humility, he cannot do amiss. For every Sin is in some respect an infringement of one of These; And all Duties whatsoever have a more Remote or Near Relation to these in the Text, some to One, some to Two of them, and some it may be to All.

When

When therefore these three Principal Duties, Justice, Mercy and Humility meet together, the Person, to whom that Bright Character belongs, behaves as follows. In case of Trust he shews faithfulness; To his Superiours he pays Deference and Honour, and to Those that are in Authority, Obedience. In case of Obligation he returns Gratitude and Love. He is not puffed up with a Vain opinion of himself, but studies to live peaceably with all Men. The more Rich he is, the more Liberal is he to the Poor, and endeavours to be so much the more Humble and Eminent in Virtue. To his Inferiours he shews Meekness, Gentleness, and Courtesie; To those that are in Subjection to him, he further adds Protection and Maintenance. He smotheres and suppresses all Covetous Desires, as being the Seeds of Injustice; he considers them as Sparks, which if let alone will

will break out into a Devouring Fire. He injures no Family by being Unchast, nor his Own by that or any other Vice. He is particularly Merciful to the Souls of Men; he instructs the ignorant, and admonishes those that walk in Error, and takes care to live an Exemplary Life. He is ever tender of the Reputation of his Neighbours; though he is not foolishly blind, and easy to be Imposed upon and made a Prey. He is Patient under the Afflicting hand of Providence, and content with the State of Life, which Heaven hath appointed him. He is Diligent in some Laudable employ, that he may be Useful both to himself and others. He hath a Thankful sense of the innumerable Benefits and Mercies, which his Divine Benefactor hath favoured him with; the Remembrance of which fills him with Love, Confidence, and Joy: And he ever dreads to offend the Infinite

F Power,

Power, on which his Being and Well-being totally depend.

These and other Duties are the Consequences of Justice, Mercy, and Humility closely pursued.

But moreover in the description of a Religious Man we must not omit his Devotion towards God. This is one of those Duties that proceed from Humility, as it is used in the Text to signify a due Consideration of God and our selves. If a Man hath a right sense of God's Sovereignty and Goodness, and of our Relation to Him, as He is the Author of our Being and whatsoever Good we have or hope for, Such a person will naturally fall down before his Maker with all the Ardour of filial Affection joined with the lowest humility, and out of the Abundance of his Heart his Mouth will speak. This is a Great and Important Duty, and absolutely necessary to be practised in Publick as well

well as in Private, unless some extraordinary impediment renders the thing impossible. The Use and excellence of it is This, that it is not only the payment of an Honour, which is our Maker's due, but it likewise mightily contributes to the producing and encouraging in Men Virtuous Principles, and consequently a Righteous Life: for if Virtue hath but the possession of a Man's heart, it will in course direct and regulate his Conversation. The Worship of God is therefore a Duty of great Moment, since it powerfully promotes Virtue, which, if these Means were not used, would lose much ground in the World, or wholly disappear; like as land, that lies uncultivated, is filled with Weeds. And by the way This among Other things shews the Madness of our Modern Free-thinkers or False-thinkers rather, who without Shame or Knowledge endeavour to suppress the Pub-

lick Ordinances of the Church, and traduce and vilify its Clergy, speaking evil of Dignities, which Wise and Good Men highly reverence and honour.

But on the other hand, if Men come to Church and are great pretenders to Devotion only to be seen of Men, and to gain the Repute of extraordinary Sanctity; or if looking upon Prayer to be an expiation of their past Offences, they secretly think it sets them more at liberty to return again to their Sins, Well may we say of such persons, that the Prayer of Hypocrites is an abomination to the Lord. For they grossly pervert the Design of this Duty, and what ought to be a Means of Grace they make to be the occasion of Sin; which is certainly a most horrible Abuse. For Prayer is enjoined us in order to support and increase the Practice of Virtue, and consequently not to be a Commutation for it, nor

to

to make Men the more Careless and remiss. A Religious Habit of Mind together with a Good Life, which is the sure effect of it, is as much preferable to Prayer abstracted from a Good Life, as the End is of more consequence than the Means: Or in like manner as the Fruit of a Tree is more valuable than the Leaves of it: Or as the hearty Affection of a real Friend, and the Obligations we receive from him, are more to be esteemed than the fair speeches and empty Complements of a crafty Knave. * Not every one (says our Saviour) that says unto me Lord! Lord! shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father, which is in Heaven.

It is therefore the first and Chief care of a Good Man to acquit himself well in that State of Life, which God hath assigned him, and to dis-

* Matt. vii. 21.

charge the several Duties pertaining thereto. Neither will he fail to express before the Almighty his sense of his Dependence, and his Ardent Zeal and Love.

^a Obedience is better than Sacrifice, says Holy Samuel. ^b I will have Mercy and not Sacrifice, says God himself. As Prayer under the Dispensation of the Gospel answers to Sacrifice under the Law of Moses; so what is here said concerning the one, is very applicable to the other. Good Actions, not Words, are the truest and best way of serving God; these are the Sacrifices that are most Acceptable to Him; and by our Actions we ought chiefly to examine our selves, if we have a mind to form a right judgment of our Spiritual Condition. Let us therefore make it our main Study above all things to practise Righteousness;

^a 1 Sam. xv. 22. ^b Hosea vi. 6. Matt. ix. 13. Matt. xii. 7.

for this is the Way to have our Religious Addresses accepted by our Maker. * For the eyes of the Lord are upon the Righteous, and His ears are open unto their Cry.

To conclude, If we are not Stupid and Insensible of the Duty we owe to God, and if we are not insensible of the Terrors of His just Vengeance, If we are desirous to live up to the Dignity of our Nature, If we would have Providence to be our Guide in this Life, without the favour of which Success it self is but a different kind of Distress, Or if we desire to enjoy a Glorious Eternity in the World to come, Let us I say make it our main Care to do the Will of our heavenly Father, and especially to practise Justice, Mercy, and Humility, which are the most effectual Means to promote the Honour of God and the Happiness of Mankind, which I think

* Psal. xxxiv. 15.

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no Man will deny to be the true End of all Religion. And these Duties therefore, which best promote these Ends, are justly declared by the Holy Prophet to be the Principal and Essential parts of Religion,

Now unto God, the Great Searcher and Judge of Hearts, and Rewarder of Men according to their Deeds, be rendered and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion both Now and for Evermore. Amen.

S E R-

SERMON IV.

The 2d Chapter of the Epistle of
St. Paul to Titus, and the former
part of the 13th Verse.

Looking for That Blessed
Hope.

JUSTLY do the Ministers of
the Word of God impute the
Great Wickedness of the World
to the want of Consideration!

Justly doth King Solomon brand
the Wicked Man with the odious
Character of Fool almost in every
page of his Inspired Writings!

The reason is this; because if
Men carefully considered the Ex-
istence and Attributes of the Deity,
if they considered their own Nature
and Being, and the nature and ten-
dency

dency of things they could not live a Wicked Life.

These Reflections I am led into by considering the Text; the Hope, which St. Paul there recommends to us, is no other than the Hope of Immortality: To certify Mankind of which in his Lord and Master's name, was, he gives us to understand, one of the Chief Articles of his Apostolick Mission. Paul (says he) a Servant of God and an Apostle of Jesus Christ concerning the Belief of God's Elect, and the profession of the True Religion in the Hope of Eternal Life. I have here rendered the first Words of this Epistle to Titus, as I my self understand them, because our English Translation seems in this place to be something Obscure. And, that I have given You the true sense of the Apostle, might (I make no doubt) be fairly proved, if it were needful to spend time in Criticism.

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St. Paul in the Text may very well call it in a very Emphatical manner That blessed Hope, since a Greater Encouragement of Virtue cannot be proposed to us. And as a Blessed Immortality is a Reward so Noble and Sublime, it must needs be high Satisfaction to Good Men to see how Reason and Revelation conspire together, and unanimously prove, that what they hope for is no vain Imaginary Fiction, but What shall actually come to pass hereafter.

The Assurances given us of Eternal Life are Two-fold;

First; The Express Promises of it which are made in the revealed Will of God: I mean in the Sacred Scriptures.

Secondly; the Assurances of it, which are discovered to us by the Light of Reason.

First then in the Sacred Scriptures there be Express Promises
of

of Eternal Life to the Righteous. This is so Apparent a Truth and so well known to all Christians, that a Man, that can deny it, may deny likewise that the Sun is risen at Noon-Day. To assure us of another Life after this is one of the Principal Designs of the New Testament; Life and Immortality being set in the strongest Light, that can be, by the Gospel. I shall only cite a few passages, that will fully demonstrate this first Head of my Discourse. In the 25th Chapter of St. Matthew we have these Words delivered by our Saviour himself, ^a Then shall the King say unto them on his Right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World. ^b Then shall he say also unto them on the Left hand, Depart from Me, ye Cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the

^a Ver. 34.^b Ver. 41.

Devil and his Angels.---^a And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal. In the Second Chapter of the Romans the Inspired Writer assures us, that ^b God will render to every Man according to his deeds; To Them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality; Eternal Life. But unto them that are contentious, and do not Obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness, Indignation and Wrath; Tribulation and Anguish upon every soul of Man that doth evil. And in the sixth Chapter of the same Epistle he hath these Words, ^c Being made Free from Sin, and become Servants to God, ye have your Fruit in Holiness, and in the End Everlasting Life. For the Wages of Sin is Death; but the Gift of God is Eternal Life,

^a Ver. 46.

^b Ver. 6, 7, 8, 9.

^c Ver. 22, 23.

through

through Jesus Christ our Lord. And again in the sixth Chapter of the Galatians; ^a Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a Man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life Everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all Men, &c. And in the fifth Chapter of the Hebrews we read thus, ^b Christ, being made perfect, became the Author of Eternal Salvation unto all them that obey Him. And in the ninth Chapter, ^c By his Own Blood He entered in Once into the Holy Place, having obtained Eternal Redemption for us. And in the second Chapter of the first Epistle of St. John, ^d This is the Pro-

^a Ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. ^b Ver. 9. ^c Ver. 12. ^d Ver. 25.
mise,

mise, that he hath Promised us, even Eternal Life. And in the fifth Chapter of the same Epistle, * This is the Record, that God hath given Eternal Life to us. And this Life is in his Son.

You see by the Specimens I have produced (and I might cite Multitudes to the same effect, if it were needful) That nothing can be more Explicite than the Declarations of Holy Scripture concerning the Glorious Immortality, with which Virtue will be rewarded in a Future State. Let us now Consider in the Second Place, that Reason also justifies the same blessed Hope.

If we look into the Volume of Nature and survey the Works of the Creation, we shall there find many Types or Emblems of a Life after This. As for instance That Glorious Luminary the Sun goeth down in the Evening, but in the Morning

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he rises again and dispels the dark-
 nesses and vapours of the Night. So
 likewise, though he retires towards
 the Southern Tropick, Yet that we
 may Learn there is a Wise Provi-
 dence which governs the World, in
 his due Season he Constantly turns
 back again, and the Storms and the
 Cold and the Snows of Winter give
 place to the Verdure, Beauty; and
 Fruitfulness of the Other part of the
 Year. The Moon also decreases
 and Disappears, but is soon Visible
 again and recovers her Brightness.
 We may likewise take notice of the
 State of Sleep: for when it is steal-
 ing upon us, if Experience had not
 taught us the contrary, we might
 be apt to think the dissolution of our
 Being was at hand; but neverthe-
 less instead of destroying we find it
 Refreshes and Invigorates. You will
 say I give you Simile instead of Ar-
 gument. I do confess they are Com-
 parisons; but they are also Instances

of God's Faithfulness, How safely we may depend upon Him. It is our Bounden Duty to have Trust and Confidence in Almighty God.

But let us proceed to Closer Argument, In order to shew that even Natural Reason justifies That great Article of our Creed, The Life of the World to come. To be Convinced that it Doth, let a Man turn the Eyes of his Understanding upon himself, and make his own Nature the Subject of his Inquiries. That the Human Soul is by no means a Modification of the Body, but is itself a Substance even Lucretius may teach him. For the Father of Lies and Error sometimes speaks the Truth. I say even Lucretius may convince him that the Soul is a Substantial part of the Man by the following Arguments which he produces; Because the Soul is affected with such strong Emotions both of Agreeable Passions and Disagreeable

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ones. These primarily seize and invade the Soul, not the hand, foot, nor any other part of the Body; Which proves that the Soul must be a Distinct and Substantial part of us. Besides the Soul is frequently in a Contrary Disposition to that of the Body, being in violent Disorders when the Body is Vigorous and Healthful, and at other times joyful and easy when the Body is oppressed with Sicknefs. And we also find that it is Lively and Active when Sleep hath deprived the Body of its Activity and Sense.

Thus far we may go along with Lucretius, but now we are Obligated to leave him, if we would adhere to Reason and Truth. For to maintain that the Soul is of a Corporeal Nature is a Tenet fit only for an Atheist, who denies there is any such thing as a Spirit; It is a Notion that tallies with none other but the Mad Philosophy of Epicurus. In order therefore

therefore to prove Not only the Existence but likewise the Spirituality of this our Better Part, I might insist upon its Sensation, its Consciousness of its own Existence, its free power to act or to forbear. For it is very Unreasonable to suppose that Matter receives these Qualities by undergoing any Alterations whatever. But I choose rather to desire You to consider the more Noble Faculties of Thought, Knowledge, Imagination, Memory, Reflection, Reasoning, Judging. If these are not Spiritual Endowments, I desire to know what are? and how mere Earthly Matter is capable of producing any thing of the kind, let there be what Combination of the Elements, what Motion, Commixture, or Figure you please? It is Remarkable, that Lucretius in his Account of the Soul is necessitated to have recourse to what he calls a Nameless Substance, a Sovereign Principle, The Soul of the Soul,

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The first Cause of Sensation and Thought without which they could not be. Such large Concessions did the mere force of Truth extort from the Epicurean, that in effect he fairly grants that Earthly Matter is incapable of Sense and Thought; and in Contradiction to himself Not obscurely describes and introduces a Spirit, and establishes by a Circumlocution of words the very thing he is endeavouring to exclude out of the World.

We may be satisfied that Understanding is the property of the Spiritual Nature. Would you be convinced that the Soul is not of Elementary Composition? Consider the Unbounded Scope and Matchless celerity of its Thought, and the Distinct and Numerous stores of Knowledge which it is possessed of. How Admirable, how Sublime and Excellent are these Faculties of Thought and Knowledge! And the Excellence of them is hereby further

ther Evident, inasmuch as they raise us so far above the Brute Creatures, and give to Mankind Dominion upon Earth. That we are endued with them is a Truth that is not liable to Contradiction; And we have therefore no room to doubt of the Spirituality of the Soul.

For moreover by means of our Understanding we are allied to Intelligent Beings of Superiour Degree, and bear a Resemblance (how small soever it is) of the most Wise Creator who disposed all things in the Beauteous Order which we behold. The Existence of the Deity is a Prime and Evident Truth, since our own Existence depends upon Him, and by His power ^a we live, move, and have our Being; and ^b the Heaven the Earth and Sea and all things, that are therein, bear witness of Him. It were needless therefore to add any thing more con-

^a Acts xvii. 28. ^b See Acts xiv, 15, 16, 17.

cerning the Existence of the Deity to what was said when I treated of this Text of Holy Scripture, that the Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord.

Since therefore there is a Sovereign Spirit, and the Soul of Man bears His Image and Likeness, this is a further Confirmation of the Spirituality of the Soul, and by consequence an Argument of its Immortality. For if the Soul be (as undoubtedly it is) a Distinct and Spiritual Substance, the Dissolution of the Body no more infers the Dissolution or Annihilation of the Soul, than the Decay of a Garment infers the Death of him that wears it. It is hardly to be supposed there is any body, that believes the Spirituality of the Soul, but believes also a Future State.

But Secondly ; The Soul is not only a Spirit endued with Understanding, but we likewise find it is made capable of Religion and Virtue, which are the excellences where-
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in the very Highest Perfection of Human Nature consists; since we are enabled to know God, to know our heavenly Father, and are permitted to give Him that Title, and to Adore Him, and are enabled to contemplate the Divine Attributes, and to practise Righteousness and Virtue. The Soul, if it is not benighted with Ignorance, nor made base and Degenerate by sinking into Vice, Naturally tends and Aspires towards God, as the Centre of its Happiness: It contemplates with pleasure and Delight His High Perfections, His Goodness, His Wisdom, and His Power; and loves Him as the Glorious and Gracious Author of its Being, And which is more, the Donor of Immortal Life; Reasoning after this manner, That the Influence of the Divine Attributes will be Continued; and that God, being of Infinite Power, will never shut up His Tender Mercies towards

them that use their Sincere endeavours to Obey and serve Him. A Wise and Good Man will reason with himself to this effect; I do hope that I shall one day see God; That when I am removed from this Inferiour State of Being, I shall be advanced to a Better; That as my Soul is an Understanding Spirit I shall upon the Dissolution of the Body go to the King of Spirits, and be numbred with those whom He approves of and Prefers: That I shall see that Supreme, who gave me Origin, and honoured me with the Spiritual Nature, and hath made me conscious of my Relation to Him, and given me his Leave to call Him Father: That I shall see that Glorious One whom I now trace at a Distance, and be Sensibly Affected with His Presence, whose Wonderful Works and Operations I behold already. The relation, which it hath pleased God to admit me to with
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respect to Himself, by making me an Understanding Creature and giving me Ability to live Religiously and Virtuously, is a Ground of Hopes to me of Existence beyond the Grave. It is a Comfortable, a most Joyful Reflection, that since God hath created the Soul of Man (after his own Likeness) an Understanding Spirit, and makes us capable of the knowledge of Heavenly Things, capable of Divine Contemplations and of a Virtuous Life, this amounts to a Tacit declaration that He will certainly reward us upon the practice of Virtue, and in a manner suitable to the Glorious Majesty of Heaven and Earth, expressing his Love to His Approved Servants, that live in imitation of their Maker. Such as these are the Sentiments of every Understanding and Virtuous Man.

That Virtue is an Object of Rewards, is as certain as that there is any Distinction between Moral
Good

Good and Evil; And that there is, no Man who is not void of Understanding will deny, Any more than he that hath Eye-sight will deny there is any Difference between White and Black. A Man's judgment must be Vitiated and Corrupted to the utmost degree, before it will acquiesce in such Absurdities, as that Right and Wrong are Imaginary and not real Distinctions, What is more Agreeable to the Determinations of Reason, than that they who do all the Good they can to Others deserve to be kindly used themselves, and are the particular Objects of Divine Favour?

Virtue must needs be dear to God, For, being the Result of Right Reason, it cannot but be Acceptable to Him, who is the Source of all Understanding and the perfection of Wisdom itself. It argues a Reverential Fear of Him and Dutiful Sentiments. It conduces to the Well-being

being and Splendor of his Creation, and promotes Peace and Happiness in the World. It also reflects Honour to Him by displaying the Beauties of the Souls which He hath made. It confesses his Beauteous Image and Workmanship, and is an Imitation of Himself.

Virtue is an Harmonious and Orderly Regulation of our Lives, Agreeable to Reason, whereby we do Honour to God, become Useful in the World, and deserve the Love of Man. And Vice is entirely the Reverse of it in every Respect.

That Man was designed for the Practice of Virtue, is most Apparent. For wherefore, do we think, did God give us Understanding, but with an intent that we should be governed by it? And why else is it appointed to raise War within our Breast when we do evil, but to prevent us from following Wickedness and Vice? When Almighty God
 endued

endued Man with so many Excellent and Extraordinary Gifts, it was in order to raise and distinguish him above the rest of the Visible Creation, and to make him the most Excellent and the most Amiable of all the Creatures. But we may be sure it was never designed, that Man should abuse the admirable Endowments of his Nature, and by means thereof render himself the most Monstrous and hateful creature upon the face of the Earth. His Reason was never given him for such purposes as these. But this effect it will have, if perverted and abused; For the Better things are in themselves, The abuse of them becomes so much the more Pernicious and detestable.

Since therefore to Man is given Understanding to know Virtue and Vice, and he hath free power to choose and reject which of them he will, It remains that Reward or Punishment is due to him, according
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as he makes a Good or ill use of the Faculties God hath entrusted him with. And that He, who hath created him Accountable for his Actions, will according to the Good or Evil of his Ways reward or punish him, the Divine Goodness, Holiness and Justice oblige us to believe.

Thirdly; Another Argument of an Existence beyond the Grave is the General Consent of Mankind. If we look Back, we find a Future State was believed in Former Ages. That it was believed among the Jews, is no wonder I confess, because to them were Committed the Oracles of God. The Holy Prophet Isaiah, transported with the Prospect of Futurity, expresses himself in the following triumphant manner, * Thy Dead Men shall live, together with my dead Body shall they arise: Awake and Sing ye that dwell in Dust; For thy dew is as the dew of Herbs, and

* Isaiah xxvi. 19.

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the Earth shall cast out the dead. Of the like sort also is the Declaration of the Psalmist, * God will redeem my Soul (says he) from the power of the Grave; For He shall Receive me. It is no wonder then, that the Jews entertained the Belief of a Life after This; But it was received likewise among the Ancient Greeks and Romans, as appears by their Writings which are still in being, In which we read of Elysian Fields for the Reception of the Good, and a Tartarus for the Punishment of the Wicked. But their Philosophers chiefly claim our Regard, such as Socrates, Plato, Tully. How these Excellent Persons Lived, How they Reasoned, and what approaches they were able to make towards the More sublime and exalted Doctrines of Christianity, it is needless to mention. They are so well known to the World, that they are above all Praise; Much less is their Fame ca-

* Psalm xlix. 15.

pable

pable of any increase from any thing I can say. How will they rise in Judgment against our Modern Infidels, whom Revelation from Heaven itself cannot satisfy, though brought by the Son of God!

Antiquity countenances the Belief of a Future State. And if we consider the present Generation of Men, the same Persuasion is diffused over the Face of the Earth. All the Religions in the World and all the various Sects of them unanimously assert and maintain that there will be a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, though they differ in their particular Accounts concerning it. Now even without arguing at present from the Divine Mission of our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which hath been frequently demonstrated by our Greatest Divines, this Universal Agreement is itself a strong Presumption of the Truth, Not to say a Certain and Infallible Sign of it;

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it; It argues that the Tenet so Generally held is Agreeable to Reason. Nor is it any Disadvantage to this Argument, if there be any People so Savage as to be Unacquainted with this Truth. For if they believe it not, neither do they Disbelieve it; for they never think at all concerning it. To denominate any Proposition Agreeable to Reason, it is sufficient that it carries Conviction with it when it is fairly proposed to the Understanding, and the Arguments for it are Communicated: It is sufficient that it is generally Believed where Reason is to be found, and by all Diligent and Impartial Enquirers, and by Persons of the Greatest Understanding and Thought. But the Savages, I am speaking of, can scarce be said to have attained to the use of Understanding; Barbarity, Ignorance, and Stupidity have engrossed them, so that they never take the matter into Consideration. Neither

ther are a few Savages to be set in the Ballance against all Europe and the rest of the World except themselves. Is it not remarkable on the other hand, that the Belief of the Immortality of the Soul and a Future State should prevail in many Nations of the World, that in other respects are Grossly Ignorant and Barbarous? It must be a Truth of extraordinary force and importance, that so universally Overspreads the World, and makes its way even among such People as these, who though they are as deeply sunk in Ignorance and Barbarity as the Ancient Gauls were heretofore, yet like them firmly believe a Future State.

If it be Objected, that in the most Civilized and Christian Countries, where the Best Instruction abounds, Men nevertheless live Unrighteously, and Consequently disbelieve a Future State: The Answer is, That it is indeed a Melancholy

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Reflection, that the Best Religion that is, should have so little effect upon many that make profession of it; But they live Unrighteously, Not because their Understanding rejects this Belief, but because they themselves are not Governed by their Understanding, but live contrary to it, being Actuated by principles that are Base and Low. The Allurements of the World through their Slothful Negligence and Inconsideration prevail against their Reason, and cause its Testimony and Remonstrances to be postponed and ineffectual. Wheresoever the Light of the Gospel shines, Vice is the Sole cause of Unbelief; for no Virtuous Man (as long as he continues such) will ever let go this Pleasant and delightful Hope. No Virtuous Person will rather make choice of the Chagrinant and Gloomy Prospect of Final Perdition, which Nature hath an utter Aversion and Antipathy to.

But

But though their Reason cannot restrain Wicked Men from doing Wickedly, Yet neither can it be totally suppressed or put to Silence, but it will frequently protest against their Evil Practices, and make not only Christians but even Heathens sensible, that their Wicked Life Here deserves Punishment Hereafter, and that it is to be expected. Such is the Natural Voice of Reason, and since it makes such declarations in the Breast of Man by our Almighty Creator's appointment, there is no room to think that they are fallacious. Hence the Fears and distracting Horrors of Mind, which not only seize evil Men of low Degree, but likewise those that are most Powerful, a Profligate Nero or a Lewd Tiberius. It is in vain to fly to Atheism for relief; No Man is nor can be an Infidel at all times: Epicurus himself must have his intervals, must sometimes Believe and

Tremble. And according to the Account of him, which ^a Tully puts into his Friend Cotta's mouth, and which in itself is very probable, No Man ever lived in greater Dread than Epicurus did, that Grand Champion of Atheism, that false Pretender to Intrepidity and Coiner of Absurdities!

Since therefore we are encompassed with so great a Cloud of Witnesses, Since Antiquity believed a Future State of Rewards and Punishments, and the same is Believed in all Parts of the World, Since all Men either Apprehend or Desire it, and it is impossible any Man should be sure of the Contrary (And certainly this Consideration shews it is necessary to be Circumspect) ^b Let us (as the Inspired Writer advises) lay aside every Weight, and the Sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with Unshaken Constancy the race that is set before us.

^a De Nat. Deor. Lib. I. ^b Heb. xii. 1.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Let us consider the Necessity of such a Belief towards the Government and Well-being of the World. To be the better sensible of this, let us for once suppose an Impossibility, namely, that Mankind were Convinced and Satisfied, that there would be no Life after This, that Nothing was to be expected after Death, but that the Grave would be the utmost Bound of their Existence. In this Case how furious and Ungovernable would Mankind be? How impatient of the Unavoidable Hardships in Life, Impatient of any Uneasiness or Obstacle to their Desires? How would they throw down every thing that stands in their way! How violently seize the Riches and Pleasures of the World! What Wars, what Insurrections would there be! And what Murders, Assassinations and Poison in Secret! As Wicked as the World is now, it would then be Exceedingly more so. And how

Many, that are now Honeft and Virtuous, would then be Otherwise! Nothing would be Sacred, nothing Safe. The Brutes, which are void of Understanding, may be Tame and Tractable; but Mankind, poffeffed with a Belief that Death would put a final End to their Being, would be Fierce, Outragious and Unruly: Their very Reason, that great Excellence and Ornament of Human Nature, would turn to Rage and Madnefs, and occasion the Wildeft Confufion and Diforder. Such an Irreconcilable Enmity is there between Reason and the Abfurd Belief of utter Extinction in Death! There is fo great a Repugnancy and inconfiftence between them, that we may be certain our Creator never defigned we fhould difbelieve a Future State. It was never his intention, that this Beauteous World, which He hath made, fhould be full of Anarchy and Uproar.

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Since therefore the World is so much influenced by the Belief of a Future Existence, and Good Men especially; Since (I say) Mankind is hereby in a considerable Measure restrained and kept in Awe, this likewise is an indication that this Expectation, which is of so great Moment in the World (as well as so Current therein) proceeds from God the Supreme Governor of all things, and consequently is True. Since God is the first Author of it.

For if we have right Apprehensions concerning the Goodness and Power of God, can we with justice to these His Divine Attributes, and consistently with our own Principles, Think that He governs the World by fallacious Hopes and delusory appearances rather than by Solid and Substantial Truth? Or that He will suffer the Best of Men to be frustrated and disappointed, and to be Losers by their Virtue? Or is it cre-
H 4 dible,

dible; that He governs his Free-agent and Rational Creatures without setting before them either Rewards or Punishments? Hope and Fear are the Springs of Human Actions.

Since therefore it is Almighty God that gives to Mankind the Hope of Immortal Life, we need not be afraid to trust to it: For it is impossible, that it should deceive us.

Fifthly; Another Argument that there is a Futurity beyond the Grave, is taken from the Vanity and Miseries of Human Life. For in the first place it is Evident, that Almighty God hath created Mankind, and enriched their Nature with several Admirable and Extraordinary Endowments; Insomuch that the Soul of Man, when it is adorned with Virtue and with Wisdom, is indisputably the Best Image and Likeness of God himself, that is to be met with upon Earth: Nor doth any thing,

thing else in this World bear so near a Resemblance of Him. Moreover for the sake of Mankind He hath created a Fair World both of Animate and Inanimate Creatures. Thus far therefore we see a Profusion of Goodness, and so much Magnificence as is Worthy of a Most Gracious and Glorious God. But on the other hand how insufferably it reflects upon the same Divine Being, if we suppose that after all the Excellences conferred upon Human Nature, and the Glorious Apparatus and Provision that is made, Mankind was only intended to live a Short Life in Continued Scenes of Vanity and Vexation? For to what purpose was this Master-piece of the Creation formed with all its Great and Wonderful Appendages, if there is no Life after this? For as for the present Life, its Vanity and Miseries are such, that when we reflect upon the Years that are gone over our heads, we
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are unwilling to tread the same path over again, which we have passed already. The Miseries of Human Life are an Argument of a Future State: For ^a when I consider thy Heavens, the works of thy fingers, the Moon and the Stars which Thou hast ordained, what is Man, that Thou art Mindful of him, and the Son of Man, that Thou visitest him? If there were no Life but this, Almighty God would have spared His Act in the formation of the World. He would have spared this Pompous Provision, and never have created Mankind at all, if He had not designed them a Better State of Existence than the Present. I have no need to dilate upon the Numerous Varieties of Cares and Fears, Sorrows and Misfortunes which Men encounter with, or the formidable Troops of Diseases which invade our Mortal Bodies, or Poverty and

^a Psal. viii. 3, 4.

Want,

Want, the Sword and Famine, Publick Calamities and Domestic Distress. The Vanity of this Life is particularly Visible in Many Infants, that come into the World, undergo pain and speedily Depart. And is this the whole Extent of their Duration? Were they brought into Being merely for this? Which do You choose to Believe, that God is an Unkind or a most Gracious Father? In a Word * He hath not Created all Men for nought, as the Holy Psalmist expresses it; Nor hath He reared this Fine World in vain: But as He hath made a Glorious Beginning, we may be sure His Whole Plan is Glorious. For Almighty God is the God of Harmony and Order, and there is no Incoherence or Confusion in the Works and Operations of His Hands: Nothing can be more absurd than to imagin that the Deity should act with less Design and Wisdom

* Psal. lxxxix. 46.

than we mortals do. The Psalmist corrects the Bad Reasoners, that can be of that mind, with becoming Zeal and severest indignation; but the Stripes he gives them are precious ones; for the only design of them is to make his own Accurate Sentiments and Elegant instruction pierce the deeper. Understand (says he) O ye brutish among the People; and ye fools when will ye be Wise? He that planted the Ear, shall He not hear? He that formed the Eye, shall He not see? He that teacheth Man knowledge, shall not He know? Psalm the xcivth.

Sixthly and lastly; Let us consider the Promiscuous dispensations of Providence in this Life. For though Virtue is the most Likely Way to Happiness even in this World, Yet it cannot be denied that for Wise and Good reasons Providence sometimes suffers Brave and Virtuous Men to be treated in a very evil manner:

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While on the other hand Wicked and Bad Men do many times not only escape with impunity, but are likewise exceeding Fortunate, and as the Holy Scripture tells us, ^a have their Portion here. One Man's Crime brings him to Execution; and Another by the very same Wicked Attempt raises himself as high as Earthly Grandeur can carry a Man. Worldly Prosperity is no proof at all of a Man's Virtue, nor do his Misfortunes give us any Commission to pronounce or think him Wicked. In short all Temporal Advantages and all kind of Misfortunes do sometimes befall Good and sometimes befall Bad Men. It frequently happens in this World, that Virtue is Discountenanced, Despised, and Distressed; while the Wicked have great Power, and flourish as the Bay-tree. Even Heroes in Virtue are sometimes Crushed and Overwhelmed by the

^a Psal. xvii. 14.

practices

practices of Mighty Sinners. Now what shall we say to these things? Shall not the Judge of all the World do right? Most certainly He will; Nothing is less to be doubted of: He will not permit the Wicked to go Unpunished, nor suffer the Just and Upright to lose their Reward; He will not suffer a Man's Virtue to be his Ruin, nor Wickedness to be the way to Happiness; and therefore it follows, that there must be another Life after this, in which Re-tributions and Compensations shall be made. For do we think that Almighty God is so Void of Goodness, that He will not reward the Well-doers? Or is He so Indigent and Void of Power, that He cannot reward Those, whom he delighteth to honour? Surely the Power of Almighty God is Abundantly demonstrated and Evident to every Man; It strikes so strong upon all the Senses of our Nature, that we cannot possibly

fiby be ignorant of it. The Existence and Power of the Deity are as Manifest to Reason's eye, as the Sun in his Meridian Glory makes a most lively impression upon the Bodily Sight: It is true, some few of us have lost the Glorious gift of Sight, and are Blind; but it is not the General Nature of Mankind to be so. If therefore we Consider Almighty God as the Creator of the World, we manifestly behold His Unbounded Goodness, His Wisdom, and His Power; and from hence we may rest assured, that the Almighty is still the same, in His Providence and Government of the World. When we see the Senseless and Putrefying Remains of a Brave Man before us, can we think that this is all of Him? After he hath been tossed several Years upon the Tempestuous Sea of Life, and hath denied himself many things, and suffered many things for the sake of Righteousness
and

and Virtue, is he at last reduced to this? This Supposition appears utterly false even by the Natural light of Reason, and to be inconsistent with the Honour of the Wise and Gracious Maker and Ruler of the World! With how much Lustre do the blessed words of Revelation shine in opposition to this great Absurdity! Well done thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over Many things: enter thou into the Joy of Thy Lord.

To conclude the whole; Is then a Future State Capable of Proof from Reason, and Demonstrable from Scripture? Is Immortal Happiness proposed to us? And is it within our reach, if we are not shamefully wanting to our selves? Let us then lay aside every Mean and Sordid View, and aspire to This truly Great Reward by ^b living (as

^a Matt. xxv. 21.

^b Titus ii. 12.

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the Holy Apostle advifes us) Soberly, Righteoufly, and Godly in this prefent World.

Now the God of all Grace, who hath called us unto His Eternal Glory by Chrift Jefus, make us perfect, ftablifh, ftrengthen, fettle us. To Him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen!



MEMORIAL

the Holy Spirit and the
Righteousness and Glory in the
present World to come and the
future life of the Saints who
have obtained the victory over the
world, the flesh, and the devil
and are now in the Kingdom of
Heaven. The Saints who have
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the world, the flesh, and the devil
and are now in the Kingdom of
Heaven. The Saints who have
obtained the victory over the world,
the flesh, and the devil and are
now in the Kingdom of Heaven.

SERMON V.

The 1st Chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Philippians, and the former part of the 27th Verse.

Only let your Conversation be, as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

IN this Chapter the Apostle endeavours during his imprisonment at Rome to animate the Philippians in their Christian Warfare, which they had so happily begun. And that they might lose no Ground or Courage, because He their Great Leader under Christ had met with such fierce Opposition and distress from a Malicious World, he

gives them to understand, that it was a great Honour done him to be called to suffer for the advancement of God's Glory; and that the imprisonment which Divine Providence thought fit to expose him to at present, was matter of joy and Triumph to him rather than of Grief and Trouble, because it visibly promoted the interest of Christ's Holy Religion in the World. For as Fire which is fanned by the Wind, breaks out into a brighter flame: Even so did the Christian Faith spread and prevail the more by the resistance of its enemies, who only served to draw upon it the Attention, Approbation and Assent of all impartial and Well-disposed Men. The Apostle declares therefore, that he had just occasion to rejoice that Christ was magnified by his means, and for the Great Reward laid up for him in Heaven. He praises the Philippians for the Constancy, which they

they had hitherto shewed; and exhorts them, whatever befalls, to let their Conversation be, as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

In treating of these Words I shall First endeavour to explain the Meaning of them. Secondly I shall enlarge upon the Duties contained in them.

First then I am to explain the Meaning of the Words in the Text, Let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel.

The word Gospel is an exact translation of the Greek word which is interpreted by it; and it signifies in plainer English, the Good Tidings. It is certain at least, that this is the import of the Original. The Gospel therefore of Christ signifies The Good Tidings to Mankind, that God upon the condition of a Holy and Good Life hath received Fallen Man into Mercy and Favour through Jesus Christ. For the Sentence of E-

verlasting Death, to which we were liable by the Rebellion of our First Parents in Paradise, and by the Corruption of our Nature thereupon, is abolished and revoked, to all Those who believe in Jesus, and Obey the Righteous Commandments He hath given them. And the Kingdom of Heaven is opened to all such, after they have passed a State of Trial here Below. Christ by his Death upon the Cross was made a Propitiation and Sacrifice for us; and by Rising again the Third Day, and triumphing in His Human Nature over the Power of the Grave, hath given to all his true Disciples full and Absolute assurance of Immortal Life and everlasting Happiness after death. These are Good Tidings sure! the very best Musick, that can possibly sound in the Ears of every Reasonable and Understanding Person! Alas! if in this Life only we had hope, well might we call
Man-

Mankind miserable indeed; since in this Life Vanity and Misery abound, as is very Visible. It is probable King Solomon would not have insisted so much upon this melancholy Truth, which is of itself so Manifest, Were it not that Men are sometimes so blinded, that scarce any Light will strike them, be it ever so strong: they are frequently proof against the evidence of a very clear Truth, and receive no Conviction or Impression at all from it. Which often comes to pass with reference to that, which I am now speaking of. For the transient Sun-shine of Prosperity is so apt to inchant and deceive Men, that they are ready to say within themselves, They shall
 * never be moved; Never more troubled with any Change or Vicissitude; Though perhaps a very short space of time will undeceive them, and humble them as deeply with

* Psal. xxx. 6, 7. Psal. x. 6.

affliction and grief, as they were highly Elevated and exalted before. The Wise Consul Cicero was no doubt very far from being singular in his ^a sentiment (for I call it his, though he puts it in Cato's mouth) that, with reference to the Happiness of Life, he should be utterly unwilling to live it over again. If some Men upon a Superficial survey seem to be Objects of Envy, yet how long doth this appearance last? And how many Thousands are there on the other hand, whose case is much Otherwise! If then according to the Opinion of Wise Men the Present Life of itself is hardly worth acceptance, what a Reflection doth this seem to cast upon the Great Author of Nature, who cannot be supposed to have formed the Universe without Wise Design? How then shall we solve this Difficulty? Thus; God hath given us this Life in order

^a De Senectute.

to Something Better. And indeed if it were not for a Future State, the Noble and God-like Faculty of Understanding, which Man is endowed with, would be ill suited to his Condition: It not only renders him more sensible of Present Evil than the Brute Creatures are; but also makes him feel the Calamities of Others, as well as his Own; And doth likewise represent unto him Disasters both Past and Future, which the Beasts are not at all concerned with. It would have been better for him to be (as the Brute Creatures are) ignorant of his Doom, and incapable of thinking about it.

Let us therefore reason Wisely in this Matter, and from the Wisdom of the Deity infer the Necessity of a Future State.

If there be a God (and nothing is more Certain than that there is one) He must needs be acknowledged Wise, and therefore Holy and Graci-

ous, a Lover of that which is Right, and a Rewarder of those that please Him by Well-doing. But the Dispensations of Providence in this Life are promiscuous to the Good and to the Bad. It is therefore apparent, that there must be a Future State, in which Good Men shall be Rewarded, and the Wicked punished, and the Justice of God exerted and displayed in the most illustrious manner. Even upon this Footing we might be assured, there is a Futurity beyond the Grave. But we have God's own Word and promise, by which we know, that as our Blessed Lord and Saviour rose from the Dead, So likewise the Day will come, when our Mortal Bodies shall be raised to Immortality. Which most important Truth we ought ever to have before our Eyes, and to Govern ourselves in all our Actions and Demeanour by this Principle. For this is the Meaning of St. Paul, when
in

in the Text he instructs the Philip-
pians and all the Christian World
besides, To let their Conversation be,
as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.

Having now explained the sense
of the Apostle, and having also in-
terspersed some concurring Proofs,
which confirm the Evidence of the
Gospel concerning a Future State, I
proceed Secondly to treat of the Du-
ties intimated to us in this place of
Holy Scripture.

The Meaning of St. Paul being,
as I just now told you, to exhort
us, since we believe the Doctrine
of the Resurrection, to take care
that all our Actions and the whole
course of our Lives in general
be Consonant and agreeable to this
our Belief; It follows from hence
in the First place, that we ought
cordially to embrace this Divine
Truth; Namely, that there is ano-
ther Life after this. For if we are not
steady and fixed in this Persuasion,
it

it cannot have a constant influence upon our Practice, which is the very thing that the Apostle requires of us, and it is our Duty to take care it be done. And why then should we make any Scruple of giving this Principle the possession of our whole Hearts? since the Evidence of it is clear and irrefragable, and hath a close connexion and inseparable union with the Honour of God our Maker, of whom to think worthily is the illumination of the Soul and the inlet of Knowledge. And truly if there were no Existence after death, here would be nothing valuable in the present state of Being: Life would not be worth having in the midst of so much Disorder and Confusion in the Rational World. Tho' by the by it is Unreasonable to the last degree (as I have seen it somewhere observed) whilst we behold that the inanimate Creation is all Regularity and Harmony, to think nevertheless that

that the Rational World should be all Confusion and Disorder. If it were so, a Soul that hath a Spark of generous fire, when you take away the Hopes of immortality, would easily disdain and despise all things else. * Tully declares, that if there is a possibility of Mistake in this affair, he chooses to be mistaken. And let every Noble and Brave Spirit say so too; Or rather let us be entirely fixed and determined, without any even the least remains of distrust: Let us I say courageously devote ourselves to the Hopes and pursuit of Immortal Life; since the Evidence of these Hopes is Clear and Strong; and if we have any Zeal and Honour for the God, who made us, the Zeal and Honour we have for him oblige us to this Way of Thinking: which is a great Assurance and Demonstration, that this Way of Thinking is Right and True. Let us not therefore halt between two Opinions; But if the

Lord be God, let us serve Him and not serve Mammon. For we know that the Double-minded Man is unstable in all his ways, his Breast is harassed and unquiet like a Country which is the Seat of War, and his behaviour is as various and inconsistent as his Belief is wavering. His Virtue (if any) must needs be in a very weak and languishing condition.

Nevertheless when I counsel every Christian Brother to make the Desire of Heaven the rule and measure of his Conduct, far be it from me to insinuate that any Man ought to retire into Solitude like the Recluse Monasticks in the Church of Rome; or ought to be remiss and negligent in the Duties of his Proper Calling. For Religion is a thing which chiefly consists in Action; and we are then serving God, when we are pursuing the Christian Duties of that Station of Life, in which

* James i. 8.

He

He hath placed us. When God gave us being in this World, it was his design and pleasure we should mind the affairs of it, with due moderation: this the Subsistence and Well-being of Mankind requires, to which every one is a Debtor. The more Active therefore any Man is, so much the better, provided his Actions are Wise and Honest, and do not shut God out of his thoughts, nor exclude a Daily recourse to him by Prayer. Far then be it from me to dissuade You from the Social Virtues, or from Industry, or from any thing whatsoever that is Commendable and Good: I only inculcate our Blessed Saviour's own Lesson, that Ye ought to ^a seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness in the first place. But to be well employed in that state of Life unto which God hath called us, is not any ways obstructive to our Salvation, but very

^a Matt. vi. 33.

much

much promotes it, and is altogether necessary. As for the Holy Sabbath, the immediate Service of God is itself the sole Business of that Blessed Day, which therefore ought to be devoted to Praises, Prayers, and Meditations both in the Congregation and in Private.

I proceed to the Second Duty that presents itself; That since we profess the belief of Everlasting Life, we ought to Rejoyce in the expectation of it. And to say the truth, if we have really this Belief in us, it is impossible we should do otherwise. Who can without ravishment reflect upon that Happy Day, when he shall escape the Contagion of this Base and fordid Earth! When he shall be purified from its Defilements, and discharged from its Bondage, and admitted into the Glorious Liberty of the Sons of God! O Happy Birthday indeed, Unspeakable the Ecstasy, when the Soul shall be admitted
into

into the beatific presence, and receive the full Marks of the love and Approbation of its Heavenly Father! When all Tears shall be ^a wiped away, and we shall never more experience Affliction and Sorrow! When God shall illumine our understanding with Meridian Lustre, and there shall be no room in us for Weakness and imperfection! Then will True Life begin, which before we shall never know; Then shall we enjoy everlasting Peace in the Blisful Conversation of all the Children of God. What shall hinder us then to run our Christian Race with the utmost Vigour and Alacrity, that we may attain unto the High ^a Prize of the Crown of Life? How detestable is Sin, which hath with-held our Speed, and rendred the way more difficult and impervious! Shall we not redouble our Activity and diligence, that we may

^a Rev. vii. 17. xxi. 4.

^b Philip iii. 13, 14.

recover the time we have mis-spent and lost? O the immense riches of the Goodness and Mercy of God, who bountifully continues opportunities to us still, and supplies us with grace to make use of them, and excites in us this blessed Hope, this ^a joy Unspeakable and full of glory!

With Meditations of this kind will every true Christian delight and entertain himself; as the Psalmist doth particularly in the Sixteenth, Thirty-sixth, Seventy-first, and Seventy-third, and the Ninety-sixth Psalm. He will with the Holy ^b Prophet rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of his Salvation; especially on the Lord's Day, which with Christians is a Weekly Festival in remembrance of our Saviour's Resurrection, and in order to contemplate our own. Every Sabbath in the whole Year is set apart for Re-

^a 1. Pet. i. 8.

^b Hab. iii. 18.

ligious Meditations of this kind particularly.

Thirdly; since we profess the Gospel of Christ, we ought herewith to comfort and support ourselves in the time of Trouble.

No Calamity, no malicious Enemy can rob a Man of his Christian Hope; and while he retains that, he may easily condemn the Vanities of the World, which are as inferiour thereto, as the light of a Glow-worm is to the Noon-Day. Such a one is only intent upon doing the Will of God, and performing his Duty; and maintains a Brave indifference to other things. He is so much conversant in Heaven, that temporal evils have but small power over him, as well as of short Continuance. He is steeled in the Armour of the Gospel. If any labour and are heavy laden, the Gospel of Christ will give rest unto their Souls. Let it but

* Matt. xi. 28, 29.

have dominion over us, and it would make us despise and live above the World: It would mightily improve and exalt our Minds, and engage us in the practice of every thing that is truly Noble, and worthy of an Immortal Soul: It would give us the Innocence, Piety, and Zeal of the Primitive Christians, and the Unshaken Courage of Martyrs. Experience bears witness to the truth of what I say: For Human Nature is still the same; And the same cause, acting at free liberty as before, would produce the same Effect, which it did then.

Behold what a Precedent the Victorious St. Paul hath given us; what a true Greatness of Soul he discovers in the midst of Persecution itself; and how he exhorts the Philippians to rejoyce with him in those sad times: What things (says he) ^a were gain to me, those I counted loss for

^a Phil. iii. 7, 8.

Christ.

Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: ^a If by any means I might attain unto the Resurrection of the Dead. ^b Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: ^c let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Thing: ^b for our Conversation is in Heaven. ^e Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and Crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved. ^f Rejoyce in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoyce.

It would be too much to repeat all that St. Paul writes upon this Occasion, but I have extracted enough to shew what kind of Sentiments he had in the midst of Distress. And we may now the less wonder, that he is even worshipped by degenerate

^a Phil. iii. 11.^b Phil. iii. 15.^c Phil. iii. 16.^d Phil. iii. 20.^e Phil. iv. 1.^f Phil. iv. 4.

Christians: As extraordinary a Person as this Great Apostle was, be sure to invoke him is Folly; but happy is the Man that strives to imitate him, as far as he is able. A true Christian's Belief takes out the Sting of Adversity: It is not strange, that a Man who thinks all his Portion is in this World, is wholly taken up with the Intrigues of it; But he who believes the Next, will look upon the most glittering Allurements of this World as childish Toys and Trifles beneath his notice; and will be unconcerned at the Want of them, which would burst weaker Understandings with grief and Envy. He that calls himself a Disciple of Christ, ought to scorn to distrust God and disbelieve a Future State; and ought likewise to be ashamed of seeming to do so.

Fourthly and lastly; With this principle, the Belief of the World to Come, we ought to resist all Tempta-

Temptations: And to animate ourselves with it under every difficulty of a Christian Life.

This Principle, if we give it a full Admission into our breast, will, as I have been observing, make all things easie: And if we do otherwise, it is our own fault. Vain and empty are the Temptations we are assailed with in this our State of Trial; they are no other than specious Evils and gilded baits: But let them be supposed as desirable (which they never are) as their outward Appearance promises, yet when they are weighed in the ballance against Immortal Life, it is manifest the disproportion would be infinite. Any reasonable Creature, that absolutely knew such immense Happiness was within his reach, would be so fired with the desire of it, that nothing which he could suffer in this Life, would be able to dismay him, or divert him from his Aim: his af-

fections would be so engaged, that no difficulty would seem too great to encounter with; because the Reward proposed so infinitely outweighs all other Considerations. Besides, our Heavenly Father is not unfaithful, that his Providence should suffer Sincere Men to be tempted beyond their Strength. Whence then, notwithstanding these Truths, proceeds all the Wickedness, which abounds in the World? I answer briefly, from the want of a Steady, Strong, and Lively Faith.

The Understanding is the Faculty, which rules the Man; And when by Faith it is regulated as it ought to be, our Actions are all agreeable to the Rules of Reason and Virtue. Infomuch that ocular Certainty instead of Faith would have been inconsistent with a state of Probation.

On the other hand, when our Judgment is imposed upon with temptations

temptations carrying a false shew of Happiness, then do we fall into all manner of Sin. If (says our Blessed Saviour) ^a thine Eye be single, thy whole Body shall be full of light; but if the light that is in thee be Darkness, how great is that darkness! When the Understanding is corrupted, or (which is the same thing) when the Principles are Vicious, how bad must the whole Conversation be! But when the Understanding is inlightned by a full assent to the Great Truths of Christianity, the whole Deportment will be Orderly and Regular. A Christian's Belief therefore is (under the Grace of God) the Source of his Righteousness.

The Just shall live ^a by Faith, says St. Paul: Now the reason, why he attributes so much to Faith, is not because he meant in the least to exclude Good Works (the necessity of

^a Mat. vi. 22, 23. ^b Gal. iii. 11. Heb. x. 38.

which

which he most zealously affects every where) but because a genuine Faith, such as the Apostle is speaking of, which ^apurifies the Heart, and produces the true Love of God and our Neighbour, will as certainly shew itself in a good Life, as a fruitful Tree, planted to advantage, will naturally bring forth Fruit. Any other sort of Faith than this is altogether ineffectual, and will miserably deceive those that trust to it. ^bFor (as the same Apostle explains his own Meaning) in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by Love.

Since therefore Faith (which by various Metaphors may be called the Foundation or Root or Shield of Righteousness) is a fully sufficient Security in the midst of Temptations, repelling all the fiery darts of the Wicked: and Since we profess,

^a Acts xvi. 9. ^b Gal. v. 6. ^c Eph. vi. 16.

that

that we are possessed of this Spiritual Armour, Let us above all things make use of it: For this is the ^a Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.

Now unto Him, that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the Presence of His Glory, with exceeding joy: To the Only Wise God, our Saviour, be Glory and Majesty, Dominion and Power, both Now and Ever. Amen.

^a 1 John v. 4.

that we are possessed of this Spirit-
 al Armour, let us above all things
 make use of it: For this is the Vic-
 tory, that overcometh the World,
 even our Faith.

Now unto Him, that is able to
 keep you from falling, and to pre-
 sent you faultless before the Presence
 of His Glory, with exceeding joy:
 To the Only Wise God, our Savi-
 our, be Glory and Majesty, Domi-
 nion and Power, both Now and
 Ever. Amen.

SERMON VI.

The 15th Chapter of the Epistle of
St. Paul to the Romans, and the
latter part of the 16th Verse.

Being sanctified by the Ho-
ly Ghost.

ST. Paul here gives us to under-
stand, Who is the Author of
Holiness and Virtue in Good
Men; and that all Christians what-
soever, Gentiles originally as well
as Jews, must be endued with grace
by the Holy Ghost, or otherwise it
is impossible they should please God.

This Text of Sacred Scripture
gives us occasion in the First place
to celebrate the Glory of God.

Secondly it points out to us the
Weakness and Dependency of Hu-
man Nature.

In

In the First place therefore the Text, which I have read unto You, gives us occasion to celebrate the Glory of God.

The Glory of God shines now where with such transcendent Lustre as in the Intellectual World. Justly, very Justly do all Wise and Good Men admire and adore the Divine Attributes, which are displayed in the Material Creation; and, like the Royal Psalmist, reflect with astonishment upon the Harmonious Fabric of Nature, the Product of the Earth, the Organic Bodies of Living Creatures, and subjects of the like sort: But nevertheless a Reasonable Soul and Understanding Spirit is a Creature exceedingly more Noble, and demonstrates the Wisdom, Goodness, and Power of its Maker far beyond any thing of the inanimate or irrational kind. A Man's Understanding must therefore be but low, who only observes the Marvellous formation of a Plant,
and

and the Symmetry and delicate colours of a Flower, and at the same time is ignorant of the superiour excellences of a Rational Soul: The dignity of which as far surpasses the Flower, as Intelligent Nature exceeds Insensibility, or Everlasting Duration the space of a few Days. For there are in the World Two very Distinct Principles of the Creatures which God hath made; namely Spirit and Matter. The former of which (Spirit) hath Understanding, is Active, Manages and Governs, and bears some Resemblance of the Divine Nature itself: But Matter on the other hand is Lifeless, Insensible, Inactive, and merely obedient to the Impulse and operations of Spiritual Beings. From hence it appears how much the Intellectual World excels the Material Creation; and Consequently how Infinite and inexpressible the Glory of God must needs be in the former
of

of the two, which is so immensely
Conspicuous even in the Latter.

Holy and Understanding Spirits
are of all God's creatures the most
Excellent, as they retain the Image
of the Deity Himself, and are Dignified
in the Scripture with the
High Title of the Sons of God.
• For as many as are led by the Spirit
of God (says the Apostle) They
are the Sons of God. And accordingly
what Great Perfection the Angels
and Saints above are advanced
unto, and in the midst of what
Great Felicities They dwell, we in
this Present State can no more apprehend,
than a Man, that is blind from his Birth,
can have any Ideas of Light, Colours,
and Vision. So profuse is the Munificence
of God to His Saints, loading them with
Benefits and Honour! The Saints therefore,
who Triumph in Heaven, are the Chief
and primary Instances of

• Rom. viii. 14.

Divine

Divine Goodness, to which They owe their Being, and all their High Perfections.

As for the Saints Militant here on Earth, They also are Sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and owe all the Virtues, That shine in them, to the Grace of God. And to Him therefore the Glory is due, and not unto themselves. ^a Every Good Gift (says St. James) and every perfect Gift is from Above, and cometh down from the Father of Lights. There are ^b diversities of Operations (says another Apostle) but it is the same God, which worketh All in All. ^c It is God, which worketh in you both to Will and to Do of His good pleasure. It is He that enlightens our Mind, and fills us with Understanding, and teaches us to Distinguish our True Happiness. It is by His Grace, that our Wills and Affections are regulated, and Inor-

^a James i. 17. ^b 1 Cor. xii. 6. ^c Philipp. ii. 13.

dinate Passions suppressed and rooted out: He supports the Spirit of His faithful Servants, and gives Them vigour and Alacrity in the midst of the Greatest difficulties; and maketh them to overcome the World, and all its Terrifying Threats, its Gilded Vanities, and Treacherous Temptations. * In Him we Live and Move and have our Being; Unless He gave us ability, we could not do the least thing that is; much less could we lead a Life of true Virtue and Religion, which is an Undertaking of the highest Moment and importance, and will hereafter be Crowned with Inestimable Rewards. The Divine Potter, who made the Vessel, fills it with what precious Stores He pleases. God communicates to His Creature Man such Endowments of His Spirit, and in such measure, as in His Infinite Wisdom He sees good.

* Acts xvii. 28.

But

But perhaps Some one may be ready to say within himself, If God be the Sole giver of Grace, how then can any Man deserve His Anger by not having it?

Nay but O Man, who art thou, ^a that repliest against God? Shall blind and ignorant Man, immersed in Sense, and imprisoned in the Body, take upon him to censure the Conduct of Infinite Wisdom? Shall Dust and Ashes arraign the Tremendous Majesty of Heaven? This were Arrogance and Presumption in the highest degree. Alas! His Judgments are ^b unsearchable, and His ways past finding out; They are as ^c high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? It is a sure Maxim in the breast of every true Christian, that the Lord is ^d Righteous in all His Ways, and Holy in all His Works.

^a Rom. ix. 20. ^b Rom. xi. 33. ^c Job xi. 8.

^d Psalm cxlv. 17.

Every Good Man rejects with indignation every thought or Scruple, that hath a tendency to derogate from the Honour of Almighty God: he checks in such cases the extravagance of his Reason, when he finds it aiming at things above his reach; and Considers that Human Understanding in general hath its Limits assigned it, which during this Mortal State it cannot pass.

Let no Man therefore be so audacious, as blasphemously to impute his Want of Goodness to the Deity. God's Grace is offered to all His Rational Creatures as universally as the Air or Light: if they themselves exclude it, it is their own fault, they become Obnoxious, and can only accuse themselves. It is indeed God alone, that enables us to live a Righteous, Sober, and Godly Life, but He withholds His Assistance from no Man, who is willing to make use of it. ^a Blessed (says Our Saviour)

^a Matt. v. 6.

viour) are They which hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled. Meaning, that they shall be filled with Righteousness and the Good Fruits of it in this Life, and Much more with a Glorious Perfection and Endless Happiness hereafter. From hence therefore it follows, that if Men will not make use of the Grace that is so freely offered them, it is plain the fault lies wholly at their own Door.

It is true, there is not given unto all Men an equal Measure of God's Spirit; but All Men have it fairly in their power to please their Maker, and to lead a Good Life, if they themselves will.

The Total Deprivation of God's Grace is the Heaviest Doom, that a Man is liable to in this Life; Things are then reduced to the last Extremity, Justice triumphs, and Mercy can make no further Opposition. This therefore is a Ven-

geance that falls upon none but the Worst of Men, who by Great and Habitual Wickedness have lost all Sense of their Duty, and made themselves the Perpetual Slaves of Sin. Whosoever is willing to repent and Amend his Life, Whosoever hath any even the least desires of being Better than he is, may be sure his Case is not yet so Desperate. But those Ancient Heathens were in this deplorable state, Of whom the Apostle tells us, that even as they did not like to retain ^a God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate Mind. And that being past feeling, they abandoned themselves to ^b lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. And such Graceless and profligate Wretches are elsewhere described, as ^c having their Conscience seared with a hot Iron.

^a Rom. i. 28. ^b Ephes. iv. 19. ^c 1 Tim. iv. 2.

There

There be Others, whom for heinous Offences, which they have committed, God thinks fit to leave to themselves, permitting them to run headlong into other Crimes, whereby they involve themselves in Great Trouble and Distress: The Consequence of which many times is, that they are hereby awakened into a right sense of their past Guilt and Folly; And then with deep Humiliation they will readily plead Guilty before God, and own the Justice and Goodness of the Severe Measures He hath taken with them. But if they are Proof against Correction, and harden their heart in the midst of their Calamities, Yet still it is most Certain, that Providence is just in punishing the Wicked and Unrighteous.

As for Good Men, who have the performance of their Duty really at heart, God never withdraws the influence of His Spirit from them un-

less for a short space, that they may afterwards be more Sensible of so great a Blessing, and more Vigorous in the use of it. In a word, All things work together for good unto Those that love Him.

From all that hath been said concerning this matter, It appears that it would be infinitely unjust and impious for a Man, when he is tempted, to say he is Tempted of God; or to imagine that his Maker is the Author of Sin. God forbid. Let God be justified, and every Man plead Guilty: Let perverse Man acknowledge his own Vileness, and not dare to Charge it upon the Most Perfect Being, who is as much Supreme in Wisdom and Goodness, as in Pre-eminence and Power.

The Almighty bestowed upon His Spiritual Creatures a Liberty of acting; A Gift in itself very Great and Good; but they abused it, and by their means therefore Sin

* Rom. viii. 28.

entred into the World. No blame redounds from hence unto God Himself, as it is no Dispraise to a King, that he will not enslave and debase his Subjects; Which would be a very Wild and mad Objection against a Virtuous Prince; whose greatest Honour it is to preserve them free. When God made Spiritual Creatures, He then gave the most Glorious instance of His Creative power; although some of them will choose Evil rather than Good. But their Deserts pursue them.

God gave unto Men freedom of Action, and they abused it: He most liberally offers them His Grace, which they Obstinateley reject: And they are therefore most justly Answerable for their own Wickedness. God is the Author of all Good, but there is no Unrighteousness in Him no Darkness, no Mixture of Evil at all.

There is one thing more, which I am Obliged to take notice of, before

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fore I leave this Head. It is true, that without God we can do nothing, All our Ability is from Him, and to Him alone therefore all the Glory is due. But though the Strength, we have, is from God, we have it wholly in our own choice to Use or Not to Use it. It is Necessary to remember, that in our Spiritual Warfare our Success will be in proportion to the Diligence and Vigour with which we exert ourselves. To pray to God for Ability without using that, which He hath already given us, is to provoke Him by our Folly and Impudence. If you would be Victorious, be upon your Guard, be in Earnest, and use Consideration: but if you give your self up to Sloth and Indolence, it is in vain to call upon Heaven for Help; For unto every one that uses that which he hath, shall be Given, and he shall have Abundance: but from him that uses it not, shall be taken away

even that which he hath. Which I take to be the exact Meaning of Our Saviour in the 25th Chapter of St. Matthew and the 29th Verse.

Having now made it appear, that God is the Donor of all Holiness and Virtue, and that He fairly enables all of us to be Holy and Virtuous, if we ourselves will; I proceed to the other part of my Discourse, wherein I am to speak of the Dependency of Human Nature.

As under the former Head we considered the Riches of the Goodness of God, and the Sovereignty of His Power; Let us now reflect what we ourselves are. The Spartan Philosopher made himself justly famous by his Wife Maxim (*Γινώθι σεαυτὸν*) Know thy self. It is a Heavenly piece of Wisdom to know one's self: By this the Good Angels stood confirmed in their Exalted state of Happiness; And for want of it Lucifer

cifer and his Rebellious Adherents fell. The Knowledge of one's self produces Humility, and Humility is the basis and Groundwork of all Virtue, without which it cannot subsist. As therefore it highly concerns us to acquire a True Knowledge and consequently a Humble Opinion of our selves; So among other ways of doing this, there is one General Method, which of it self is fully sufficient for this purpose: It is what even the Holy Angels govern themselves by, and which they learn an entire Humility from, Although They have no Meanness or Corruption in their Nature to make them Humble, as Mankind have; and Although they have no Personal Mis-carriages to Reflect upon, and be Mortified with; Nor feel Various Distress or any Troubles whatsoever. The Method I am speaking of, is This. Let us ever Remember, ^a that the Lord

^a Psal. c. 3.

our God made us, and not we ourselves; In short that we are his Creatures, and in all things entirely Depend on Him. In order to shew how much we depend upon Him, I might take notice in the first place, that we were all of us born Men into the World, not by virtue of our own Will and Choice, but because it was the pleasure of God to honour us with Human Nature. And I might further add, that to be the Son of a Prince or of a Beggar is the Manifest Allotment of Heaven, and was not the effect of any Man's own Option; Yet the Circumstance of Birth Only very much influences and colours the whole Tenor of this Mortal Life. And I might also mention our Natural Endowments, Genius of Mind, and Strength of Body, and the like, which are evidently the Immediate Gifts of God Himself; and might serve to teach us how little it is in our power to choose
what

what Situation we have a Fancy to; and that to determine our State of Life is the Act of God, and not our Own: It is He, that places us in such a Station, as in His Goodness and Wisdom He sees proper. Man hath not power in himself, to procure to himself Prosperity, or to avert Misfortunes; but he receiveth both from the Hand of God; without whose assisting or permitting Providence, the Labour of the Builders is but lost, and the Watchman waketh but in Vain *. Moreover Life itself, and all the Conveniences of it are Precarious, and must be Resigned, whenever the Divine Author of them pleases.

From such Instances as these it appears how much we Depend upon God in Temporal (as well as Spiritual) Things, Beyond what Inconsiderate Persons are aware of. But I shall not dwell any longer up-

* Psal. cxxvii. 1.

on Temporal Concerns, because my Text directs me rather to speak of our Dependence upon Him in Things Spiritual.

As those Persons are guilty of excessive Perverseness and Absurdity, who are proud of temporal Advantages instead of being Thankful for them; So it is likewise a Madness to grow conceited of any Advantages of a Spiritual kind. Knowledge and Virtue are as much the Gift of God as Inheritances or any Temporal Blessings whatsoever. If therefore any Man seems to be superiour to the Generality of his Brethren in any kind of Knowledge or Goodness, let him carry in mind this divine saying of St. Paul; * Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou, which thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst Receive it, why shouldst thou Glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

2 : Cor. iv. 7.

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This is the Consideration, which, as I observed before, preserves an Unspotted Humility in the Holy Angels, notwithstanding their Exalted State; And this same Consideration ought to have the like effect upon the Short-lived Sons of Earth, and to make them likewise truly Humble, Namely that we receive our Being, and whatsoever Abilities we have, from God.

Created Beings are in themselves Opake, they are destitute of Light, and void of Goodness, unless so far as it pleases God to Illuminate, and shine upon them. They have their whole Excellence from the same Hand, they have their Being from.

How far then was the Church of Rome from having a due regard to Humility, when She devised her Doctrines concerning Merit and Works of Supererogation, whereby She lifts up Man to Undue Heights and irreverently dishonours the Infinite

finite Majesty of God! Is it a Venial Attempt upon the Purity of Christ's Religion to decree that Good Works are meritorious of Eternal Life and Happiness? Can Man, weak Man, who is so much involv'd in Ignorance, and so often driven by Passion, and frequently stands in need of Pardon and forgiveness, fairly deserve by his Behaviour in this Life so Great and Endless a Recompence? It is gross Vanity and Presumption to think it. Immortal Life is the free Gift of God, and not an Equivalent (God knows) for any Merit in us. God in bestowing it upon Good Men doth not weigh their Deserts, but with the utmost Liberality and profusion pours down upon them the influence of His Divine Goodness and Mercy; having regard to that which it is worthy of Himself to do, Not what they are worthy to receive. It is the Gift of God (says St. Paul) * not

* Eph. ii. 8, 9.

of Works, lest any Man should boast. For, as he argues elsewhere, to him that Worketh is the Reward not reckoned of Grace, but of Debt*. If (as the Papists assert) Good Works were meritorious of Heaven, this detestable Consequence would follow, that God becomes a Debtor, and a deep one too, to Man, as often as the Christian Course of a Virtuous Life is ended. But God is a Debtor to no Man, although He is a Patron of infinite Beneficence to the Just and Good.

What hath been said against the Romish Doctrine of Merit, equally overthrows that of Supererogation; for if a Man cannot pay the price of any thing, it is plain it is impossible he should advance beyond it. Supererogation is only the forenamed Absurdity heightened and accumulated; by defending which the Romanists do in effect declare, that they know

* Rom. iv. 4.

how to drive an exact Bargain with God for Heaven itself, but that nevertheless Many of them are so generous as to give Him great advantages; for which he may be sure He stands very much obliged to them! Can any Discreet and honest Man be pleased with such Monstrous positions as these, which give a preference to Man above God Himself? No. Those who promoted, and at the same time Understood them, were undoubtedly Men, who, notwithstanding external Pretences, Inwardly scoffed at all Religion. These Impious Tenets were, I say, Propagated and Maintained merely to enrich the Bishop of Rome with a fund of Spiritual Merit; with which to bribe and influence Deluded Mankind, and procure to himself Exorbitant Power; And to fill his Treasury with Gold and Silver, in Exchange for this Imaginary Merit and Counterfeit Pardons. So

great were the Corruptions in the Church of Rome! So Gross were the Practices of its Pastors, who sacrificed Religion and Virtue to Ambition and Sordid Lucre! For they affected by Wicked Deceits to regain the Wide Dominion and Power, which the Emperors of Rome had once. And accordingly it was their practice to insult Sovereign Princes in the most Notorious manner.

The Doctrines of the Romanists concerning Merit and the Superabundance and Communication of it (though utterly repugnant to Holy Scripture) tally very well with several other Enormous Doctrines and Practices of theirs; Such as Purgatory and Masses for the Dead, Indulgences, Infallibility, Transubstantiation, The Worshipping of Saints, of Images, and of Relicks, Prayers in an unknown Tongue, Auricular Confession, and the Courts of the Inquisitors. Such were the
Engines

Engines of Popery, Such the horrid Arts to bind Mankind in the Double fetters of Superstition and Servitude. They may justly be called the Depths of Satan, being very Subtle and unspeakably Wicked Artifices. I cannot but make the following Inference, that the Manifold Corruptions in the Church of Rome ought to make us so much the more sensible of our inestimable Happiness in our present Most Gracious Sovereign. Both the love of Religion and Virtue (which have been most Grossly injured by the Usurping Bishops of Rome) And likewise the Love of our Country Strongly oblige us to be Loyally-minded, especially to the Best of Kings, As we are Commanded in the Word of God. Surely where Integrity is not wanting, it can be no difficult matter to see which are to be preferred, Loyalty, Religion, Knowledge, and Liberty on the one hand, or Rebellion,

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lion, Superstition, Ignorance and Slavery on the Other. Which then do ye make choice of? Which do you desire to transmit to your Posterity?

But come we now to the Conclusion of this Discourse.

Since therefore we are Sanctified by the Holy Ghost, Since God is the Author of all Holiness and Virtue, Let us ever Magnify and adore the Glorious Creator of the Intellectual World, the Bounteous and most Loving Father of Holy Spirits innumerable in Heaven and on Earth.— And let us ever ascribe unto God the Glory due unto Him, acknowledging that every good Gift descends from Him, and that He is the Author of whatsoever is excellent in the whole World.—Let us also from hence learn the Necessary, the indispensably Necessary Virtue of Humility, which is one of the Main Vitals of Religion: let us I say learn Humility, remembering, that

if we have any thing Good in us. we receive it all from God, and depend entirely upon His immense Mercy and Goodness, ^awho resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace unto the Humble.—Let us also from hence learn to pray unto Him for the Assistance of His Holy Spirit in the performance of our Duty, That He would be pleased to direct us into all Wisdom in which we are concerned, and to rectify our Wills, that they may readily follow the Dictates of our Understanding. Our Saviour hath given us very good encouragement to approach the Throne of Grace in this manner; ^bIf (says He) Men, that are evil, know how to give Good gifts unto their Children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him? —Finally, let us from hence learn to be Diligent in making good use of

^a 1 Pet. v. 5.

^b Luke xi. 13.

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that Measure of Grace, which God is pleased to bestow upon us; left in His just Displeasure He take away from us the Talent committed to our Care and punish our Unfaithfulness and Sloth by depriving us of the Abilities He hath given us, and of the Opportunities, we enjoy, of Serving Him. Which heavy Judgment God of His infinite Mercy ever defend us from.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier, be rendred and ascribed as is most due, all Honour, Thanks, and Praise, all Dominion and Majesty for Ever, Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VII.

The 5th Chapter of Ecclesiastes,
and the 10th Verse.

He that loveth silver, shall
not be satisfied with silver;
nor he that loveth
abundance, with increase:
This is also Vanity.

WHAT is the sense and meaning of the Inspired Author, when he condemns the love of Silver? Doth he mean, that there is any Natural evil in Silver itself? No; we know that all things were Originally and by Creation very Good. Genesis the first Chapter, and the last Verse. The fault therefore lies in the weakness and
sinfulness

sinfulness of Men, who are apt to
 abuse the good creatures of God;
 of which it is generally observed,
 that the more Excellent they are
 in themselves, they become so much
 the more pernicious and violent-
 ly mischievous, if perverted and
 misapplied. Thus Bread and Wine
 are two very Admirable Benefits of
 Nature, for which the Holy Psalmist
 most justly celebrates the Divine be-
 neficence and Liberality, which giv-
 eth us richly all things to enjoy^a;
 But the abuse of both these is as
 Dangerous, as the excellence of the
 Things themselves is Great. Intem-
 perance and Ebriety are Intolerable
 Vices, and produce very Dismal
 Consequences. In like manner Gold
 and Silver are very liable to be abu-
 sed by Bad Men (and so are all good
 things besides) yet they themselves
 are of great use and Service in the
 World, and are to be looked upon
 as the good Gifts of God to Man-
 kind.

^a Psalm civ. 14, 15.

kind. Wherefore the Inspired Writer doth not suppose the Nature of Silver to be Evil; He doth not exhort Men to throw their Wealth into the Sea, as a Heathen Philosopher is said to have done. But it is no wonder, that a Heathen should err. On the other hand Sacred Scripture is a Lantern to our feet, and a Light unto our Paths. When it condemns the love of Money, it is in a Limited Sense; for otherwise there would be an end of the laudable, Useful, and Necessary Virtues of Diligence and Industry. For who would labour and take pains for that, which he hath no value at all for? But I can assure you, that the Inspired Writers (and King Solomon in particular) give all the Countenance, that is possible, to those Virtues; and most severely censure and threaten the Opposite Vices. For instance, St. Paul with Authority

2 Psalm cxix. 105.

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commands, ^a if any will not work, neither should he Eat; judging such a one unworthy even of the Present Life. And King Solomon likewise speaks very expressly; for he was moved by the same Spirit. ^b The hand (says he) of the Diligent maketh rich, and shall bear Rule. And in another place, ^c Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise; which provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her food in the Harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?—Yet a little Sleep, a little Slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy Poverty come as one that travelleth (that is to say, seize thee, as a Thief would do upon the Road) and thy Want as an Armed Man: You see, King Solomon is very far from promoting Idleness, or discouraging Industry. His Meaning in

^a 2 Theff. iii. 10. ^b Prov. x. 4. xii. 24.
^c Prov. vi. 6, 8, 9, 10, 11.

the Words of the Text is this. That an Inordinate and Vicious love of money which tempts us to be Unjust, or to be Unmerciful towards our Brethren, or any ways to swerve from the Laws of God, is entirely to be Condemned; and the Man, that barter a Good Conscience for Worldly gain and profit, an Egregious Fool. That an Immoderate Covetousness and Love of Wealth is an extreme pernicious Vice, and likewise extreme Folly; Riches, how great soever, if separated from the fear of God, but Emptiness and Vanity, Vexation and Misery even in This Life. These are the Sentiments of the Wise King; and He gives us this Lecture more than once in His most Excellent Writings. • Better (says he) is a little with the Fear of the Lord, than great Treasure and trouble therewith, or (according to the Septuagint, who in effect say

• Prov. xv. 16,

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the very same thing) than great Treasures ^a with Ungodliness. And elsewhere Solomon tells us, ^b that Better is a little with Righteousness than great revenues without Right. And so likewise in the words of the Text, having before exhorted us to the Fear of God (Verse the Seventh) and having all along considered, how apt Men are to misplace their Affections, and to mistake their true Happiness, He further adds in this Tenth Verse, He that loveth Silver, shall not be satisfied with Silver; nor he that loveth Abundance, with increase: This is also Vanity.

Having explained the Meaning of the Words, I shall now expatiate in the following manner.

First I will endeavour to shew the great Wickedness and Folly of exchanging a good Conscience for Worldly Gain and Interest.

^a Μὴ ἀφ' ὧν, Prov. xv. 16. ^b Prov. xvi. 8.

And

And Secondly, that Riches, how great soever they may be, yet if Separated from the Fear of God, are but Vanity and Vexation even in this present life.

In the first place I am to represent to You the great Wickedness and Folly of exchanging a good Conscience for Worldly Gain and Interest.

The Desire of Worldly Gain and Profit is no longer justifiable, than it is in subjection to the Laws of God, and entirely under the Command and direction of Religion and Virtue. If once it begins to be unruly and Inordinate, and to incroach upon our Duty, Or any ways to assume an Equality or seek the Preference above Religion and the Fear of God (by which it ought to be Regulated and governed) It then becomes most Sinful and Detestable. For we find, that St. Paul in his Epistle to the Colossians, the third
Chapter

Chapter and fifth Verse, hath most justly branded this horrible Vice with no Milder a Name than Downright Idolatry. Because those, that are guilty of it, forsake the God that made them, who is the real Pillar of their Strength and the rock of their Salvation; and love and regard the Dust of the Earth more than they do Him. Every Vicious lover of Money incurs this heinous Guilt, as often as he doth a dishonest, unjust, or Unrighteous thing; or is Uncharitable, hard-hearted and Unmerciful. For he actually obeys the evil suggestions of Mammon, and refuses to hearken to the Commandment and Word of God. He rejects and affronts the Divine Authority, and flights the Divine Laws, Although those Laws are founded in consummate Wisdom and Goodness, Upon the Nature and Harmony and Subordination of Things in the World; Upon absolute and perfect Equity
and

and Right: And although the Interest, Peace and Happiness of Mankind depend upon the Observation of those Sacred Laws: And though the Sinner himself is in danger to lose Heaven, and to stand Accursed and be for ever Miserable for the Violation of them. And why doth he Violate them? Because he prefers the Love of Money before the Love of His God: Whereas the Duty, which we owe to Almighty God is infinitely more Obligatory upon us, and ought to prevail more Powerfully with us, than any other Consideration whatsoever. For since we receive our Being and whatsoever we possess from Him, it follows, that We our selves and all that we possess ought to be entirely at His Devotion and at His Dispose; and we ought to Homage and to do Him Honour with the Utmost Powers that we have, and with the most Ardent Affection and the most Zealous

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lous Gratitude. And again, as there is an infinite disproportion between the Eternal Creator and Things Created, between the Founder of all Being and Non-existence; so God is a more Worthy Object, and deserving to be exalted in our Affections infinitely above all things. This the Holy Psalmist was very sensible of, when he devoutly offered up his Soul, the best and most Noble Offering, which Man is able to make, and consequently ought to make. ^a Whom (says he) have I Heaven but Thee? And there is None upon Earth, that I desire in Comparison of Thee. This was the case of the Psalmist, in whose Soul the Love of God bore absolute Sway; and no Guest harboured there, but what was subject and Obedient thereto: This was the case of the Example which is set before us, and this is the Duty of every Good

^a Psalm lxxiii, 24.

Christian.

Christian. And therefore an inordinate and Vicious love of Money, which is censured by King Solomon, and (as you have likewise heard) by St. Paul, must needs be notorious Wickedness; Because it stands upon an equal footing with Idolatry, and is a Violation of the Supreme and Highest of all Duties, even of our Duty towards Almighty God.

Although the Argument, which I have used, is of itself so cogent and Demonstrative, yet there is also another, which well deserves to be joined with it. I must therefore intreat You to consider, how innumerable and how Great mischiefs an inordinate Love of Money occasions in the World. Then you will understand how pernicious the root must be, whose fruits are so Corrupt and Poisonous. By the swarms of accursed Monsters, which are engendred by this Parent, you will find how Distinguished a Monster it

self must be, and how much advanced above others in Bad Pre-eminence, if I may be permitted to use that expression. The horrid Effects, which an inordinate Love of Money continually produces, are such as these; Fraud and injurious Deceits; Perjury; Treacherous Dealing and Breach of Trust; Disimulation, Falshood, and pernicious Flattery, which too often marring the Understanding and corrupts the Morals of the Rich; Crafty machinations and wicked plots to circumvene and ruin the Innocent, The Oppression of them by means of superiour Wealth and power, or Advantage taken from their ignorance and simplicity to strip them of that which is their Right. And to these we may add Theft, Robberies, Fightings, Murders, Wars. These and such like are the dire Effects of the Love of Money. Sundry and Various are the evil Arts, which are
made

made use of by wicked Men; and the Crimes, which they commit, are innumerable. I am sensible the Iniquities, which I have been laying before you, are shocking even to think on; but since they are not Fancied and Imaginary, but are undeniably practised in the World, it is absolutely necessary to warn you against those things, for which the wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Disobedience; and concerning which we know, that they who are guilty of them, shall not (unless there follows a Sincere Repentance) inherit the Kingdom of God. You see then what a Horrible Sin the Inordinate Love of Money is; what great disorders and Mischiefs are occasioned by it! It is the inordinate Love of Money, that debases Mankind, who are endued with an Understanding Soul, into Savage wild Beasts, devouring

^a Ephes. v. 5, 6. Colos. iii. 5, 6.

one another: It is the inordinate Love of Money, that makes this Fair World the Stage of Rapine, of Cruelty, and of Blood; and banishes Justice, which is the very Life of Society and happiness among Men, and banishes heavenly Charity from Hence. For where Justice is driven away, there can be no room for the more Perfect and Heavenly Virtue, Charity.

Thus far we have beheld the Tents of Ungodliness; if from hence we turn our Eyes to the poor Sufferers that are oppressed by the Wick- edness of the Ungodly; we shall have so much the fuller view of the numerous Evils, that are occasioned by the inordinate Love of Money. For here will occur the pitiable Distress of the injured Widows, and the Orphans Tears, and the Groans of the Poor; and Hunger, Thirst, and Cold; Nakedness and Rags; Deformity and Filth; Abject Looks
and

and a Dejected Spirit; and a long Train of Sorrows and Calamities, which cannot now be reckoned up. Such Cruelties Men are prevailed upon to heap upon the heads of one another through execrable Covetousness and the love of Gain; although they are Partakers of the same Human Nature; although they are knit together in the same Bond of Civil Society; although they are united in the profession of the same Faith, and are the Children of the same heavenly Father, and are as yet Candidates together for everlasting Life. But why do I mention everlasting Life? Their Creator's Curse will be upon them, the Divine Vengeance will be their Portion, who make a mock at the Counsel of the Lord, and grind the faces of his Poor. Of these Unjust and Covetous Men some give the whole rein to their Injustice, and are as wicked as they are able to be: Others

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take care to keep within the bounds of the Law, and to avoid its Lash: Others defraud and oppress as far as they think is consistent with the Safety of their Reputation. But there are none of these, but have room enough left to be very desperately Wicked, since they square their Actions by rules of their own making, and not by the Law of God and Righteousness. Even those, who are Sincerely Just, must to their Justice add Charity and Mercy, if they would avoid the Sins, which the grand Vice of Covetousness brings forth.

I will finish this Proof, which I have here been urging, with telling You, that it is briefly summed up by St. Paul in these words, 'The Love of Money is the root of all Evil; or if we would interpret more according to the Letter, The Love of Silver is the root of all Evil. But the first is the adequate sense of the Apostle.

1 Tim. vi. 9, 10.

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The Arguments, I have produced to prove the Wickedness of an Inordinate love of Money, do likewise infer the Folly and Unreasonableness of it; However I shall not content my self without speaking more distinctly to that point.

What we learn in many places of Holy Scripture, and particularly in the Writings of King Solomon, ought to be imprinted in the deepest character upon our Minds; Namely, that the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom, and the Wisdom, and the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding. The First and Principal Consideration of every Wise Man in his Undertaking is, Whether or no it is agreeable to the Dictates of Right Reason and the Word of God, and consequently approved of by his Maker. Hence it appears, that the Unjust and Covetous Man is no more to be esteemed

Prov. ix. 10.

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Wise,

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Wife, than that Man deserves to be called a Mathematician, who doth not assent to the ^a Famous Heureka of Pythagoras; Or can be said to be skilful in Arithmetick, who denies the truth of the Multiplication Table, or hath an ill opinion of the Golden Rule; Or lastly, to make one Comparifon more, than the Body can be said to be in good Health, ^b when the whole Head is sick, and the whole Heart is faint.

I very well know an Unjust and Covetous Man may have what we call Good Natural Parts; but it doth not therefore follow, that he is entitled to the denomination of Wife. For to be Wife is one thing, and to be Subtle is another. Even a Stratagem and Artifice, which is extremely Subtile and fine-spun, may at the same time be extremely Unwise and foolish. The Unjust Man may indeed pride himself in his Fancied

^a A Theorem in Euclid, 47. 1. ^b Isaiah i. 5.

Excellence;

Excellence; but you may be sure, how much soever it may shine, it is but base Metal, and is no true Gold. For as he manages the matter his Natural Sagacity is neither to be Commended, nor to be Admired. It is neither beneficial to the World, nor Useful to himself. But it would have been much happier for him, to have been without it; since it will very much inflame his Condemnation in the Day of Wrath.

For it is not the Possession of things, but the Use of them, which makes them truly Valuable. For instance, of what service are fine Pictures to the Blind, or fine Musick to the Deaf, who cannot hear it? What is the Unjust Man the better for his Natural sagacity, since he makes no use of it in those things, which alone concern him most? His great share of Sense is no better than a Sharp Weapon in a Madman's hands;

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hands; to be an Instrument of Mischief both to himself and Others.

The Unjust and Covetous Man is so far from being Wise, that he forfeits his claim to Reason. It is the great Honour and Privilege of Mankind, as they are Reasonable Creatures, to know God, and to be Virtuous, Sociable, Charitable and Just: but the Covetous Man throws off the whole Glory of Human Nature. And he falls infinitely below the Beasts that perish. For he renounces God and Goodness, and by so doing reduces himself to a Level with the Infernal Spirits, * for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

When we compare him with the Beasts, that have no Understanding, we find, that after all his boasted Acuteness and Sagacity he acts irrationally, as they do. For it is the part of a Reasonable Man to look Backwards and Forwards,

* Jude 13.

and

and not only to mind the Time that is now instant: but the Unjust Man hath not this circumspection; but is blind to Futurity and regardless of it. So foolish is he, and ignorant! For he acts as though he thought he was Immortal and was to live for ever, though perhaps this Year may be his last. If he had a Sense of Futurity, he would say to himself, How will this Action, which I am going to do, appear to me at the Hour of my Death? If he had any thing of Wisdom in him, he would treasure up to himself such kind of Possessions, as would increase in their Value, as Death approaches every day nearer than the former: he would endeavour to acquire the Riches and Virtues of the Soul, and would seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness in the First place. But alas! Worldly Riches become less worth every day than the foregoing, as Life

is

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is never at a stand, but is continually hastening to its Period. And as for the Hour of Death, we shall then see how little the True Value of those things is, which we imagine to be so charming and desirable now. But then they will appear in their true Nature, as they really are. At the hour of Death the unjust Man will know, what a Wretched bargain he hath made, and how low a price he hath set upon his Soul. What hath been acquired by indirect and sinister ways, will then excite his Aversion, and the utmost Confusion and Horror, upon the remembrance of his past Sins and Wickedness. I need not intimate to you, what Agonies of Despair, what exquisite Anguish will then have its beginning! How inexpressibly Terrible the instant Prospect of Eternity will be!

I now proceed to the Second general head, which is this; That
 Riches,

Riches, how great soever they are, yet if separated from the Fear of God, are but Vanity and Vexation even in this present Life.

He that idolizes Riches, and makes them the principal Object of his Desire, is fatally mistaken, and embraces Misery instead of Happiness. Alas! how often are Riches and Happiness utter Strangers to each other! Notwithstanding the glittering figure, which Rich Men make, if we could dive into the thoughts of their heart, or were able to take a complete Survey of their Affairs, their Case, instead of moving our envy, would frequently command Pity. The Poor Man (for I do not now speak of him, that is reduced to extreme want) hath oftentimes as great a share of the External Comforts of Life, as the Rich; the Poverty of the One being ballanced with some inconvenience, which the Other labours with. So that
there

there is no such disparity between them, as is vulgarly imagined. But persons in a Middle Station are frequently happier than either of them. One Rich Man is afflicted with the Gout, another with the Stone, a Third with a Broken Constitution, a Fourth with the incurable Malady of Old Age which renders him incapable of enjoying what he hath, a Fifth is unfortunate in his Wife and Children, a sixth thinks himself Unhappy because he hath no Heir to his overgrown Wealth. Every Man's Experience and Knowledge of the World will suggest to him divers other kinds of Trouble, which are incident to the Rich. A little Leaven therefore leavens the whole Lump: One Uneasiness often makes Life Disrelishing and unagreeable, Often marring the pleasure of Many Possessions, and spoils the whole Harmony of Enjoyment. And when Men have not the Government of
themselves

themselves but are Slaves to their Passions, it is surprizing to think how small a trifle shall be able to do this. Haman can have no Peace, because Mordecai doth not make Obeisance to him. The Glory of his Riches, The multitude of his Children, The Honours and Preferments heaped upon him, do all of them, he confesses, avail him nothing, so long as he sees the Jew sitting at the King's Gate. If a Man is void of the Fear of God, and hath not a regular Disposition and Temper of Mind, he will be Uneasy and Miserable in the midst of the Greatest fortune. Though Saul stood in the first Rank of the Sons of Men, was he therefore Happy? No; His unreasonable Envy against his Righteous Servant David, and his Suspicious Jealousy of him easily Overballanced the advantages of his Exalted Condition. You may see, what an opinion he had of his own

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happinefs, in the Chapter where he expoftulates with his Servants in words to this effect, ^a Hear now, ye Benjamites; What great Rewards do ye expect from the Son of Jefle, that you have all Conspired againft me, and there is None of you, that is forry for me? Are not thefe remarkable Words from one who was advanced to a Sceptre, and had overthrown his Enemies? His Friends and Brethren had no reason to be forry for him in the fenfe, in which he fpeaks; For his Outward Circumftances were exceeding Profperous: They had reason to be Sorry indeed, but it was upon a very different Account; Upon the account of his own Folly, and his own Wick- ednefs. Again you may obferve, how he expreffes himfelf, when the Ziphites offered him their Affiftance to find and to take David. And Saul faid, ^b Blessed be Ye of the Lord, for

^a Sam. xxii. 7, 8.^b Sam. xxiii. 21.

Ye have Compassion on me. You see his Language is the Language of one, that is in great Anguish and Distress; and so he certainly Was, being forsaken of God, and racked with the tormenting pain of Envy: Concerning which the Heathens used to say, that No Tyrant ever invented a greater Torture than that of Envy is. To the instance of Saul I might likewise add the instance of Ahab; For we read in the First Book of the Kings, how excessively he was disordered, and for what a little Cause, or, to speak more truly, without any Cause at all. ^a He laid him down, and turned away his face, and would eat no Bread! Neither need we at all wonder at these things, if we ponder in our Minds the Noble and Lofty Sayings of the Prophet Isaiah; ^b The Wicked are like the Troubled Sea, when it cannot rest, whose Waters cast up Mire

^a 1 Kings xxi. 4. ^b Isaiah lvii. 20, 21.

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and Dirt: There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked. The Riches of the Wicked will neither preserve their Body from the Diseases, Sickness, and Pain, which it is liable to; Nor remove the Wretched Disorders of their Mind, their irregular Passions and Vicious Inclinations. The Mind is the Chief Seat where Happiness resides; and he that hath acquired a Sound Judgment discerning what is Right and True, and a Powerful and Triumphant Reason that hath a Strong Command over the Will, hath thro' the Grace of God, which enables him, procured to himself the principal Ingredients even of Temporal Felicity. But Ungodly Men, if their Possessions are ever so great, do certainly want the Health of the Mind; and are Strangers to those Joys, which attend that enlargement of the Understanding and that Orderly State of the Soul, which
true

true Religion produces. The Ungodly know not wherein true Happiness consists; They do not seek for it where it really is, but go a Contrary Way, and therefore it is impossible they should find it: Instead of finding it, their Mind is enslaved and harrassed with evil Passions, disturbed with an evil Conscience, and affrighted with the Prospect of Eternity.

A Comfortable share of the Necessaries and Conveniences of Life undoubtedly contributes to an easy passage through this Mortal State; but a Multitude of Riches is so far from being the Only or the Chief Ingredient of Temporal Happiness, that it is not requisite at all but is merely Superfluous; Since those, who make it their Business to serve God, and to do their Duty in the Station, which He hath placed them in, may have as much Contentment and Enjoyment in a Moderate For-

tune, Or perhaps More, than if they had the Greatest Revenues. Abundance of Wealth with reference to Happiness is Unnecessary and Insufficient. You may as well expect to raise a Stately Edifice with no other Materials but only Sand, as think, that Money alone without the Fear and Blessing of God shall be able to make you Happy.

Riches are so far from removing internal Disorders and Irregularities, that in Weak and ill-disposed Minds they foment and aggravate them. They often expose Men to Idleness, Bad Company, and Flattery, and introduce the enormous Vices of Pride and Vanity, Luxury and Sensuality, Irreligion and Forgetfulness of God. Riches, I say, often lead to Excess and a very Disorderly course of Life, take off the Restraints from Vice which Men of an inferior condition are under, pamper the Body, weaken the Diviner Part,
and

and inflame the Passions. It is too often seen, ^a that the Table of the Rich is made a Snare to take themselves withal; and the things that should have been for their Wealth, are to them an occasion of Falling. Such Men by indulging themselves in Luxury forfeit the Greater Pleasures of Temperance, Virtue, a Vigorous Spirit and an Active Body. They fill their Veins with Uneasiness and store up the fewel of Distempers. They throw away the Valuable Blessing of Health, and destroy their Constitution as if they were Weary of the World, though they seem to be placed in it so Advantageously. So bad is the Influence, which Riches too frequently have! But with Those, who preserve their Virtue in a High Estate, the Case is quite different; they shine as Eminent Lights in the World, and are blessed with great Opportunities

^a Psalm lxix. 23.

of doing Good, and make use of them.

Finally, If a Man is greedy and Eager of Wealth, that very Vice having got possession of him will keep him Miserable. The more the Dropsical or Feverish person drinks, the more he irritates and inflames his Thirst. The Covetous Man (says Horace) is always in Want. The Passions of Men, after they have passed the Bounds of what is Reasonable and Right, become insatiable and Endless. There is no End of inordinate Desire. It is said of Alexander, that after his prodigious Success in his Wars he sat down and wept, because the World was too small a Conquest for him. Whether this be Fiction or a true piece of History, it paints in lively Colours the excessive Follies and extravagant Humours of Men. Were

• Plutarch in Vitâ Alex. Valer. Max. Lib. 8. Cap. 15.

it not that Covetousness is endless and insatiable, what reason had Ahab, who was possessed of a Kingdom, to envy his Subject and be sick for a Vineyard of his? Covetousness is a Passion, which always forgets how much it hath been gratified, and Continually craves more; so that there is no rest, because Something or other will be perpetually Wanting. For a Man cannot advance himself so high in the World, but there will remain Others to whom he is still inferiour; there will still be room left for Envy and for Covetousness. The poor Ignorant will never be able to overtake that Delusive Phantom of Happiness that dances before him; for it moves forwards as fast as he pursues.

To Conclude, Let us use an Honest and Honourable Diligence every one in his proper Calling; and so Doing resign our selves with a
Vigorous

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Vigorous and Chearful Spirit to the Good Providence of God. But an inordinate Love of Gain let us avoid and abhor, and always remember that Riches and Happiness are two very Distinct Things. And let us ever be Governed in all our Actions by the Fear of the Almighty; To whom be Glory for ever and ever! Amen.



SERMON

SERMON VIII.

The 11th Chapter of the Book of Proverbs, and the 23d Verse.

The Desire of the Righteous is only Good, but the Expectation of the Wicked is Wrath.

THE Great Distinction between Man and a Brute Creature is that One is Intelligent and the other Irrational; the One is endued with Understanding, and the other is Not. And certainly an exceeding great Difference it is, since it raises the one above all proportion to the other. Now one of the consequences of Human Understanding is a Regard to Time Future. The Brute Creatures are only affected with things Present,

Present, and have (comparatively at least) no Sense or Notion of what is to come. But the Views of Mankind are large and Open, and not only reach beyond Things Present, but are extended to Distant Times, and even to Eternity itself; I mean, that Men have, unless it be their own fault (For it is most certain that they ought to have) a Sense of and a Regard to the Time and Eternity, that lies before them, and are apprised that they themselves shall Exist so long. Hence it comes to pass, that Fear and Apprehension on the one hand, and Agreeable Hope and Desire on the other are so predominant in Mankind, and either engage them to Prudence and Caution in their Behaviour, or drive them into Vexation and Remorse for past Miscarriages. These internal Motions of Fear and Desire have a free Scope and very Strong Power over Man, and it is our Duty to
Regulate

Regulate rather than to suppress them; And indeed it is not in our power totally to suppress them, if we would ever so fain. For they are Natural to us, and are the Characters of God upon our Mind, which therefore it is impossible that Man should utterly erase; For we may indeed offer violence to Nature, but can never Extinguish it. The Divine Wisdom is very apparent in making these Passions natural to Mankind; The use of Fear is to With-hold and restrain us from doing Evil, and by Hope on the other hand we are Encouraged to do Well. Since therefore it is Necessary that we should have these Passions in us, and since we cannot get rid of them if we would, it therefore behoves us (as I said before) to Regulate them, if we have a mind to act Wisely and be kind to our selves, and to consult our own Interest. The way to Regulate them is to turn our Hopes
and

and Fears towards the right and genuine Objects of them: To make Almighty God's Displeasure and Everlasting condemnation the Chief and Principal Object of our Fear; and His Approbation and Favour, and Everlasting Felicity among the Saints above the Chief and Principal Object of our Desire. This is the Track which is cut out for us, This is the Design of Nature, or (to speak more properly) our Great Creator's Design; which, as long as we act in Obedience thereto, Constantly leads us to our True Happiness; and by forsaking Which Men plunge themselves in Misery. The Passions of Hope and Fear, if we turn them the Right Way, which God hath appointed, are most Sincere and Pleasant Friends to us: But if we do otherwise, and take a Contrary course, they become Treacherous Enemies and most Cruel Tormentors. Herein therefore consists a

Memorable Advantage, which the Righteous have over the Wicked; Inasmuch as the Righteous, who turn their Hopes and Fears the Right Way, have Internal Peace and Tranquillity; But the Wicked have Disturbance and Disquiet of Mind, and a fearful looking for of Judgment. The Desire of the Righteous (says the Text) is only Good, but the Expectation of the Wicked is Wrath!

In treating of which Words I might First speak of the Happy State of a Good Conscience; And Secondly of the Miserable Condition of a Bad one. But at present I shall only invite You to Consider the First of these, Namely, the Happiness of a Good Conscience.

The Man, whose Conscience upon just Grounds speaks Peace to him, may be compared to Adam in his Original Innocence, or to the Terrestrial World before the Fall,

Heb. x. 27.

when

when it was recent from the hands of its Maker and glowing in its full Beauty. For the Good Man is in a kind of a Paradisiacal State; No turbulent Passions have dominion and sway over him to Disfigure and Shake his Soul, but all is Serene and Calm Within. He is particularly delivered from the most Uneasy and troublesome Passion of Fear; No Horrors for past Guilt distract and confound him, No Apprehension of future Vengeance and Evils in Store.

A Good Conscience therefore opens a Man's Eyes to the Beauties of the Creation, and makes him survey them with Pleasure and Transport, and to enjoy their Creator in them. *Juvabat Coelum intueri,* says Seneca. It Delights such a one to Behold the Light and Glories of the Heavens, and the Fruitfulness and Verdure of the Earth. A Good Conscience gives a Man a Lively Relish of all the Common Blessings of
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of Life, and of all the Comforts of his Particular Condition.

Is then a Good Conscience a Perfect Paradise or Heaven upon Earth? No, that cannot be expected; for No Man in this World is altogether Good; The Spirits of Just Men are not made Perfect and impeccable here. But nevertheless the Better any Man is, so much the brighter the Image of God shines in him, and so much the nearer he approaches to the Original Innocence of Adam, or rather to the Glorious Example of the Holy Jesus and the high Excellence of the Saints above.

Besides, as this World is not a State of Perfection, so neither is it a State of Rewards, neither are Mankind impassible. Sinful Mankind are not (like the Saints triumphant in Heaven) delivered from all Sense and Suffering of evil; But there is a great deal of Pain and Sorrow and Misery in the World, by which even

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the Sins of Good Men are here Visited and chastised, and their Virtues exercised in order to fit them for the Immortal Happiness they are Candidates for, and to make their Righteousness appear to Men and Angels, and their Example to shine in the World.

But though a Good Conscience is not a Perfect Paradise, it is however a Ray of Heaven and an Earnest of it; and includes both Holiness and Happiness, though neither of them are as yet Mature, but are growing up to Perfection against the Great Day, when according to St. John Baptist his Allegory, ^a God shall gather his Wheat into his Garner.

A Good Conscience mightily improves every Condition of Life. Is the Man, that enjoys the Testimony of it, in Prosperity? Then is he Happy indeed, having Peace both Within and Without, the Peace of

^a Matth. iii. 12.

God upon his Mind, and as to his External Circumstances a Peaceful Station in this Tumultuous World. He is Happy in this Life, and Heir of a much better! Well may such a Man's condition be compared to that of Adam in Paradise, since it bears a resemblance of it in more respects than one; For his Soul is Serene as Adam's was during his Innocence; and his State of Life is attended with many Outward Blessings, and free from Calamity and Trouble. One need not, and indeed one ought not use many arguments to tell such a Person how wonderfully Happy he is above the Common lot of Men; But one ought rather to put him in mind of the Instability of Human Affairs, and the Vicissitudes of Life, and the Mortality which surrounds him; That he may not be lifted up above measure, and grow negligent of his Duty, and fond of this transitory

World. For it is in his power indeed to hold his Virtue fast, and to retain the Joys of a Good Conscience; but he must not expect that they shall always be accompanied with Outward Prosperity in this Life, any more than he can imagine that the Ocean should be continually Calm, or the Weather continually fine and Fair from one year's end to another. There are so many kinds of Sicknes, Misfortunes, and Inconveniences, that as long as a Man continues in the Body, he must sometimes expect to suffer in his Nearest Relations and Dearest Friends, and sometimes in his own Person. Or if his Affairs should continue ever so Prosperous and flourishing, he himself is Mortal, and must shortly leave all his Temporal Advantages; if (I say) they do not leave him first, Which is a frequent Case.

But a Good Conscience is a Durable Possession (if it be not our own fault

fault) and doth not vanish away like Temporal Advantages, neither doth it forsake a Man in the Day of Affliction and Adversity. For a Good Conscience implies a Sense, that a Man is approved of by God, and is under his Divine Protection; for he knows that he hath taken care to do those things, which his own Reason and the sacred Scriptures inform him must needs be acceptable to the Deity, ^a who is the Father of Souls, and the Source of all Understanding and Knowledge, and to whose Nature it would be a Contradiction Not to Approve of whatsoever is Wise and Good. ^b For God is Light it self, says the Apostle. In Him the full Perfection of Wisdom dwelleth, and He is the Sole Origin and Fountain of it. He possessed it in the Beginning before His Works of Old; by it He hath made the Heavens and the Earth; by it

^a Heb. xii. 9.^b 1 John i. 5.

He hath established the World, and stretched out the Skies, and made the Clouds to drop upon the Earth; and it is He that giveth Understanding, to whomsoever He pleaseth.

O Lord! how Manifold and Beautiful are thy Works! in Wisdom thou hast made them all.

Since therefore the Wise and Good Man is approved of by God, and is under His Divine Protection, this gives him an Assurance, and inspires him with Magnanimity; as knowing that as long as he pleases God, he is invincible: The World may threaten, but cannot Overpower him. A Good Conscience therefore gives a Man Spirit and Singular Bravery and Fortitude. And Good reason he hath to be (as the Wise Man affirms of him) ^a as Bold as a Lion; since he is supported by Omnipotence, and God holds him by his Right hand, that he cannot fall. What a Blissful Consideration is this

^a Prov. xxviii. 1.

to a Good Man, and particularly what a strong Consolation is it, and how Reviving a thought in times of Trouble and Danger. • He shall not be afraid of evil Tidings (says the Psalmist) for his Heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. • The effect of Righteousness (says the Prophet) is Quietness and Assurance for ever. Neither was this Truth, which is uttered by Isaiah, unknown to the Gentiles;

—Hic murus aheneus esto,
Nil conscire tibi, nullâ pallefcere
culpâ.

Let a Good Conscience (says Horace) be your Strong Hold, and impregnable Security.

A Good Conscience keeps up a Man's Courage in bad times, and whispers to him that the Present Troubles (like Storms) will be quickly over: God enlivens his Mind with the influence of His Holy Spirit:

• Psal. cxii. 7.

• Isaiah xxxii. 17.

And Providence interposes in his behalf, and ^a compasseth him as it were with a Shield.

Hence proceeds the sure Confidence and Intrepidity of Brave and Good Men in evil Times. ^b Though I walk through the valley of the Shadow of Death (says David) yet I will fear no Evil, for Thou art with me. ^c I have not gone back from His Commandments (says Job in his deep Distress) when therefore He hath tried me, I shall come forth as Gold. ^d Though the Fields shall yield no Meat (says Habakkuk) yet I will joy in the God of my Salvation.

^e How sweetly did Jacob rest upon his Stony Pillow in his Flight to Haran! For Holy Men are God's particular Care; and are Contented and resigned in every Condition. And to be Contented is the height of Affluence.

^a Psal. v. xii. ^b Psal. xxiii. 4. ^c Job xxiii. 10, 11, 12. ^d Hab. iii. 17, 18. ^e Gen. xxviii. 10, &c.

In how signal a manner did Providence also watch over the Patriarch's Son Joseph in the midst of his great Misfortunes, till it made him in the Bloom of his Life ^a a Father to Pharaoh, and Lord of all his House, and a Ruler over all the Land of Egypt! It would be needless to multiply Examples.

In short the Condition of a Good Man ^b is like a House founded upon a Rock; Safe and Secure, though the Rains fall, and the Floods come, and the Winds blow, and beat upon it.

For when a Man's Conscience upon just grounds speaks Peace to him, what should he fear? Should he be afraid of Misfortunes? He is under the Protection of Providence; And if God be on his side, it is certain no Evil shall prevail against him, but all things shall work together for his Good: Misfortunes themselves shall turn to his Advantage, and

^a Gen. xlv. 8, ^b Matt. vii. 24, 25.

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contribute to his Felicity and Honour. Should he be afraid of Sin?

• The Grace of God is sufficient for him, which never fails those that hunger and thirst after Righteousness: If he be not wanting to himself, he is well assured that God will never be wanting to him.

Should he then fear Death? he is prepared for it. Should he fear Everlasting Condemnation? No, Everlasting Life is his Inheritance;

• For God is not ashamed to be called his Father and his God. The Thoughts of God are a Source of Happiness to him; a Well-spring of Life; and do not bring with them insupportable Terror and Amazement, as to the Wicked they do.

Hope therefore shines bright upon his Soul, and illumines it with its cheering Rays; and particularly the Hope of a Glorious Eternity, which is the Chief and Principal Desire of

^a 2 Cor. xii. 9. ^b Heb. xi. 16.

the Righteous: It is a Pleasure and Delight to him (Not Shame and Horror as to a Wicked Man) to review his past Years; Which have been spent in the Service of his Maker: and, as the Poet remarks, he wonderfully lengthens his life by the prudent care, which he takes, to be able to enjoy his Time, even when it is gone.

Hoc est
Vivere bis, vitâ posse priore frui.

From what hath been said appears the wretched Folly, those Men are guilty of, who exchange a Good Conscience for any Temporal Advantage. For a Good Conscience is the highest Comfort of Life; and no Pleasure is so Great and Noble as is this, To have acted Wisely and Well. The Pleasures of Sin are Momentary, and the Riches and Honours of the World are exceeding transient, but the joys of a Good Conscience

Conscience endure for evermore; those we shall carry with us into the Other World. The joys of a Good Conscience are Spiritual and Heavenly, but the Pleasures of Sin are Sensual, Brutal, Earthly. Let us not therefore, who have Immortality in view, choose to act by Sense like the Brute Creatures, but by Understanding as do Angels. Forasmuch as the Angelical Nature excels the Brutal, so much are Spiritual Joys preferable to those of Sense. How miserably therefore are those people infatuated, that barter Innocence for every the most trifling Temptation that can be offered them! Neither is there room to think more favourably of those, that exchange a Good Conscience for the greatest Riches, Honours, and Pleasures in the World; for they are likewise guilty of the grossest Folly. All wicked Persons are unquestionably Sordid and Grovelling Souls, as

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preferring a Barley-grain before a Jewel of the Richest Value. Vile Esaus they be, selling their Birth-right for a Mess of Pottage; their interest in the Kingdom of Heaven for the Tinsel of this World. For as our Blessed Saviour observes, * what shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World, and lose his own Soul!

Infinitely Wiser is the Choice, which I hope All here present shall and do make, Namely, to Serve God, and to enjoy a Good Conscience, and the Divine Favour and Protection in this Life, and a Glorious Eternity in the World to come.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be rendred and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, both Now and for Evermore. Amen.

* Mark viii. 36.

preserving a barley grain before a
 jewel of the richest Value. While
 thus they be selling their Birth-
 right for a Mass of Torments, their
 interest in the Kingdom of Heaven
 for the Trial of this World. For
 as our blessed Saviour observes, what
 shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain
 the whole World, and lose his own
 Soul? Infinitely Wiser is the Choice
 which I hope All here present shall
 and do make. Namely, to serve
 God, and to enjoy a Good Con-
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 Now to God the Father, Son, and
 Holy Ghost, be rendered and attri-
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 Honour, and Dominion, both Now
 and for Evermore. Amen.

S E R M O N

SERMON IX.

The 11th Chapter of the Book of Proverbs, and the 23d Verse.

The Desire of the Righteous is only Good, but the Expectation of the Wicked is Wrath.

ALTHOUGH this Text is differently rendred by Interpreters (of which I was sensible when I entred upon it) Yet our English Translators, whose Version of it is probably the more exact, do Undoubtedly exhibit to us a Grand Truth, which to speak Modestly is as Valuable as that which we read in the Septuagint. And this I need not scruple to affirm concerning it, because it is Agreeable

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to the whole Tenor of Scripture, and is contained in many parts thereof, as well as Evident from Reason. Upon which account I adhered to our English Translation in the former Discourse, and shall do the same in This. The Desire of the Righteous is only Good, but the Expectation of the Wicked is Wrath. That is to say, The Righteous enjoy the Hopes of the Favour and Blessing of God who made them, and have a Better and Immortal Life in View, but the Wicked dread his Vengeance and fiery Judgment.

It is now incumbent on me to speak of the Misery of an Evil Conscience, having treated of the Happiness of a Good one on Our Lord's Day last.

It will appear, that the Misery of an Evil Conscience must needs be great, if we consider that it is the Revenge of Reason when Disobeyed; It is a Man's Reason turned against

against himself, and bringing in its Verdict against him. Now as Reason is the highest Faculty which Man is endowed with; So the more Noble and Powerful it is, the more Vile and Wretched is the Condition of an Evil Conscience. Reason then is a Spiritual and Godlike Quality ordained for Supreme jurisdiction, and is the true and Rightful Sovereign in the Breast of Man. By it it behoves us to direct the Course of our Life, and to adjust our Actions to its Rule. By it Wise Designs are formed, and fit Means made choice of in order to attain the Ends proposed. And men are likewise Hereby enabled to manage and transact all the common affairs of the World. Now this Eminent Faculty of the Soul, our Reason, assures us of the Existence of a Deity of infinite Wisdom Goodness and Power; And points out in what manner we ought to demean ourselves

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towards

towards God and towards Man :
 And by Reason we also discern that
 this Life is not the whole extent of
 our Duration, but that another Ex-
 istence is to be expected after this,
 in which Rewards and Punishments
 will be distributed. And all these
 matters of the greatest Weight and
 Moment are confirmed to us by Re-
 velation from Heaven by our Lord
 and Saviour Jesus Christ and his A-
 postles and Prophets; and many o-
 ther most important Truths are ad-
 ded, which without a Revelation
 it was not possible that we should
 know. The Almighty therefore
 left not even the Heathens (and much
 less Christians) without a Witness,
 since He hath so framed Mankind,
 that their Reason, the Highest Fa-
 culty which they have, protests a-
 gainst Wickedness and Sin, their
 own Conscience holding a Court of
 Judicature within their Breast, and
 either Approving or Condemning
 them,

them, accordingly as they have done Good or Evil; As St. Paul observes in the Second Chapter of the Romans*. And upon the account of these Re-examinations and Censures of Conscience a Heathen Author hath rightly asserted, ^b that Virtue is the only way to Tranquillity and an Undisturbed and Peaceful Life. ^c For (as he tells us elsewhere) no Man can justify the Crimes, he is guilty of, to Himself. What misery therefore must it be to a Man to be sensible that he lives a Rebel to God and to the Authority of his Reason, and that sore Punishment hangeth over his head for so doing! To act counter to Reason is the high Road to Misery.

An Evil Conscience confounds all Tranquillity, and consequently all Happiness; for there can be no Happiness; without Tranquilli-

* Rom. ii. 14, 15. ^b Juv. Sat. 10. ver. 363, 364. ^c Juv. Sat. 13. ver. 1, 2, 3, 4.

ty of Mind. The Mind, when its Peace is broken, is thrown into Violent Agitations, and is like a Troubled Sea when it cannot rest. The person thus afflicted is wholly incapacitated for any Delight, or any cool and Sedate reflection, and for all the Ordinary Affairs and Duties of Life, till such time as the Storm within ceases, and his Mind is a little Composed and Settled: Till then Nothing can give him pleasure; and you might as easily divert him if he had a Severe fit of the Ague, or were Delirious and Restless in a Sick Bed. For his whole Soul is shaken and all its Harmony disconcerted. And do we think it is the way to be Happy, to make our selves liable to such furious Disorders? Sin and an Evil Conscience, unless a Man gets rid of them, will frequently be raising these Hurricanes and Commotions in his Soul; If he would pass
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in a calm and serene way through this Mortal State, it is necessary he should take care to prevent them by following Innocence and Virtue. These Commotions of the Mind are terrible while they last, and it is a Wretched Condition to be subject to them. Preserve the Peace of your Mind, if you would be Happy.

What Tranquillity, what enjoyment can a Man have, who is dissatisfied in his Mind, and is under the power of a Strong and prevailing Fear, and hath a Burden of Guilt lying heavy on him, and depressing his Spirits? Where Fear prevails, it takes possession of the Soul, and shuts out every delightful, every cheering Object, while the Mind is wholly intent upon that which it dreads and is disturbed at. And certainly that person hath great cause to be afraid, who is under the Displeasure and Wrath of God, which unless he Reforms will be sure to

burst upon his head and make his Portion to be Shame and Misery, Ruin and Disgrace. Nor can he be otherwise than Dissatisfied in the evil course which he takes, while his Reason will frequently be suggesting to him such Reflections as these, " This is not Right. What am I doing? What will be the End of this? " While his Mind is thus Uneasy and Unquiet, there can be no internal Complacency or Satisfaction. You may as well expect a Good Voice when the Tongue is smitten with the Palsy, or Good Sense when the Understanding is disordered; That light and Darkness should be reconciled, or a pleasant Serenity and Wintry Storm be consistent with each other.

What though he hath an Extraordinary Share of the Good things of this World, and lives in ever so great Affluence and Splendor? Can external Advantages avail any thing, where

where there is no Peace Within? No, they are all vitiated and spoiled, like Good Wine put into a Vessel that is Unsweet and Impure. He will be weary of himself, his Elegant Habitation unminded, his Luxurious fare nauseated, ^a Musick harsh and grating to his Ear, Mirth extinguished, his Nights Wakeful, or his Sleep Troubled and disturbed with Images of Horror. His punishment, like that of Cain, is ^b more than he knows how to endure, and he carries it with him whithersoever he goes: It pursues and haunts him like a Ghost, and there is no possibility of escaping from it; for let him go whither he will, he carries Human Nature along with him, he carries with him his de-throned Reason and Evil Conscience, which robs him of all the Common Bounties of Nature, and

^a Non avium citharæq; cantus

Somnum redacent.

Hor,

^b Gen. iv. 13, 14.

of all the Enjoyments which his Particular state of Life would otherwise yield. And how exquisite must his Misery be, while the power of Sin and Vicious Habits hold him in a strong Slavery on the one hand, and Conscience tortures him on the other! He is sensible of his Wretched Condition, but hath not the heart to seek his Deliverance in a proper way, that is, By Newness of Life. "I am lost (says he within himself) I am ruined and sunk beyond redemption, and must never know the Calm and innocent Sweets of Virtue more!" Yet though he is in great Anguish and Agony of Mind, he dares not ease himself of any part of it, nor reveal what troubles him even to his Bosom-Friend; The horrid Secret must be ever pent up, and preserve its entire rage in his Labouring

† Palleat infelix, quod proxima nesciat uxor.

Perf.

Breast,

Breast. So Miserable is a Person, if his Conscience upbraids him, Even in the midst of Prosperity and Wealth!

But perhaps it may be said, that Rich Villains are not always troubled with the Stings of Conscience. It is true. The Guilt of some lies dormant, and nothing lulls it more than Prosperity; But though it Sleeps at present, their Reason will probably bestir itself e'er long, and notwithstanding their Temporal Advantages will terrify them as the *Hand-writing did Belshazzar in the midst of his Glory. It is probable, that they will not always fare better than the Roman Governor Felix, who ^b trembled before his own Prisoner St. Paul. For if they are Men of any Reflection, they cannot set their foot abroad but every thing gives them the Lie, since they live as though Mortality and the Ex-

* Dan. v. 5, 6.

^b Acts xxiv. 25.

istence of a Wise Deity were Fiction and Fable; But these Truths remain the same, whether they are attended to or not. If Men are so Stupid and Brutal, that they can commit horrible Evil and never feel Remorse, Conclude that the more Insensible they are, their Danger is the Greater: Nor envy him whose Wound is Mortified, Because he feels no Pain; Nor him whose House is in flames around him, Because he is in a sound Sleep, and knows nothing of the matter. For what say the Scriptures concerning those that are Incorrigible? It is a people of no Understanding, therefore ^a He that made them will not have Mercy on them, and He that formed them will shew them no Favour. ^b Because I have Called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and No Man regarded: but ye have set at Nought all my Counsel and

^a Isaiah xxvii. 11.

^b Prov. i. 24, 25, 26.

would

would none of my Reproof: I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh.
* Therefore shall they eat of the Fruit of their Own Way, and be filled with their own devices.

If Wicked Men sometimes make a shift to keep their Conscience asleep while they are in Prosperity, Yet the Day of Affliction or Dangerous Illness (which all Men must expect will visit them one time or other) will Awaken them out of their Security; Will open their Eyes and set their Crimes before them in a full glare; And then they will be astonished at the Heinous Nature and frightful Consequences of them. The Truth of which hath been proved to the World by several Instances of Notable Offenders recorded in Common History. But these I shall wave. Adversity, of whatsoever kind it be, Usually sobers those who

* Prov. i. 31.

were

were intoxicated with Prosperity, and compels them to hearken to the Suggestions of Reason, so that it is no longer in their power to be insensible or inconsiderate. * The Sons of Jacob were sufficiently Obdurate and Relentless, when they threw their Brother into the Pit; but they had a very different sense of things, when they themselves were severely dealt with by the hand of Authority, and were cast into Prison. Their Conscience then presently indicted and Condemned them. ^b Verily (say they) we are Guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the Anguish of his Soul when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this Distress come upon us. Trouble and Distress oftentimes bring Criminal Actions to remembrance, which passed Unheeded in the time of Ease and Plenty; and shew their monstrous deformity in a true Light.

^a Gen. xxxvii. 18, &c.

^b Gen. xlii. 21.

Especially

Especially when the Judgment bears a Resemblance (as it frequently doth) and points out the very Sins, for which it is inflicted. Or when it is the Visible product and Result of them.

And who can express the wretched estate of an Evil Conscience in the Day of Adversity? The Spirit of a Man will support him under his Misfortunes; but if his Mind is likewise grievously Afflicted, and sinks beneath the oppression of its Guilt, without any beginnings of a true Conversion or Amendment, what is this but a kind of Hell upon Earth? It must needs be intense Misery, when External and Internal Sufferings are heaped together, the Evils which I have lately described being accumulated with additional woes. The Present Portion therefore is Excessively bitter, and the Expectation far worse. When Wicked Men fall into deep Distress, their Spirits sink
to

to as abject and mean a pitch, as they were extravagantly lifted up before with Haughtiness and Pride. For they have no Support left. They have lost the Sure and ^a Stedfast Anchor of Hope, and are driven by the fury of the Tempest at the mercy of the Winds and Waves. The tremendous Majesty of Heaven is to them an Angry Judge; He is an Enemy to all such as continue in their Sins; Therefore they have no Refuge in their Calamity, no Help, no Consolation. Strong is the Agony, when an Evil Conscience awakes in the Bed of Sickness; but there is not a more Deplorable Spectacle in Nature than a Notorious Sinner, who is ready to breath his Last in a just Despair of Pardon, and in a full sense of the impending Terrors of Divine Justice, which renders to every Man according to his deeds. Nor is the Case very different, although it so falls

^a Heb. vi. 19.

out that the Impious and Unrighteous Man most vehemently begs for Mercy in his Dying hours, when there can be no assurance given him that he doth not sue too late. For the Scriptures peremptorily declare, that without Holiness no Man shall see God; And Holiness he hath not practised but the Reverse of it, having spent his Life in Wickedness and Folly.

Men often fall into a most Fatal Snare: it frequently comes to pass that they are so Blinded and Deceived by Passion (whether it be in the case of Desire or Ambition or Covetousness, or Malicious Revenge, or whatsoever else it be) that they do not discern the heinous Nature of a Notorious Sin till they have committed it; and then the Mist presently vanishes from before their Eyes, and they see clearly what they have done. Whereupon their Mind

* Heb. xii. 14.

is seized with all the violence of Shame, Grief, Fear, and Perplexity. It would be well, if Men would consult their Reason beforehand, and look about them, and not leap blindfold down a Precipice to their utter Perdition. An Evil Conscience hath used Some with that Severity, that they could never be at Ease, never enjoy themselves more, but lived depressed with Melancholy all their Days. It hath thrown Others into such Agonies, that they have run Distracted, and in their Phrensy made their Guilt known to the World, and delivered up themselves to Publick Justice. Others it hath reduced to such Extremity, that they have laid Violent Hands upon themselves: So strong are the Terrors of Conscience and its Anger so Dreadful, that they have fled even to the Bottomless Abyss for Shelter. So Great is the Power of Conscience!

It

It behoves Men to take care of the first Beginnings of Sin. For a small Spark often kindles a Flame which makes great Devastation. Little Sins lead to great ones, and great ones to final Rejection. When a Man dares to do amiss, he knows not what the Upshot and Event will be; He neither knows where his Sin, nor where the Punishment of it will stop, if ever by some Signal Act of Divine Mercy and Reclaiming Grace it stops at all. For he hath suffered himself to be driven by Folly and Madness, and is running impetuously down a very Steep and Dangerous Descent, so that he is no longer Master of himself to say, "I will go no further." His Ruin is inevitable, unless God's Especial Providence and Grace intervene, and lead him to Repentance and a Better Mind.

Wicked Men will not regard or Consider what they Ought, and

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what

what they ought Not to do; They will not be at the reasonable pains to resist Temptation, but are Averse to the Noble yet Necessary Virtues of Moderation and Abstinence, which God hath enjoined to be practised by All, and which therefore ought to be declined by None. The Event therefore is, that they plunge themselves in infinite Difficulties, and expose themselves to all the evil Consequences of Disobedience, and particularly to the Lash of a Bad Conscience, which alone doth much more than countervail the Contemptible Baits of Sin, and the Unsatisfactory gratification it affords. For if the face of Sin is seemingly fair and inticing, yet it carries the Sting of a Scorpion behind. The Fables of the Harpies and Sirens, or the better attested Apples of Sodom are no bad Emblems of it. For (to use one Allegory more) if the Path at first setting

ting out appears Gay and Delightful, yet the Sinner is afterwards dragged through many a most Rugged and Thorny way. It is the nature of Sin to leave Lasting ill Effects behind it. The Displeasure of God and their Evil Deserts pursue the Servants of Vice and Unrighteousness in this Present Life, and infinitely more in the Next. Wherefore bear this in Mind at all times as a Sure Maxim to govern your Life by, That the Punishment of the Wicked in a Future State will be Grievous and Intolerable. We might learn to dread the Severity of God's Anger even from the effects of it which we see upon Earth: Let us learn to be Wise from these also.

Let us therefore, as many as are engaged in a Virtuous Course, take care to shun the first Approaches to Evil; Let him, that ^a thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. And

^a 1 Cor. x. 12.

let us keep the strictest Guard against all evil Habits, and make it our Study to acquire Virtuous ones, since the power of Evil Habit is so Dangerous and Fatal. As for those who are engaged in a Contrary way, I am under a Necessity to ask such persons, why will ye weary yourselves in the ways of Sin? Why will ye persist in those things, the End of which is Grief and Trouble, Anguish and Misery, And in the World to come Everlasting Death and Endless Banishment from the Presence of God and His Holy Angels? Hear what a Gracious Invitation Our Lord giveth to all those, who are heavy laden with Sin, and are weary of the Wretched Slavery of it; ^a Come ye unto Me (says he) and I will give you Rest. For my yoke is Easy, and my burden is light. If then you will hear his Voice, devote yourselves to the Service of God while it

^a Matth. xi. 28, 30.

is called To Day; for the Night cometh, when no Man can Work, and then it will be too Late to crave Admission and his Acceptance of you. Take care therefore you do not procrastinate or presumptuously delay your Conversion to God. And on the other hand take care of Despair; for that also is a most Dangerous Quicksand, and it is one of the Chief Artifices of the Arch-Enemy of Souls to drive them upon it. Do not therefore distrust the Divine Mercies nor Our Saviour's Merits; but know that they cannot fail to reach you, if you hearken to your Redeemer and obey his instructions. For this is a ^a Faithful Saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners. ^b As I live (saith the Lord God) I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked; but that the Wicked turn from his way, and Live:

^a 1 Tim. i. 15.^b Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? ^a If the Wicked will turn from all his Sins, that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely Live, he shall not Die. For though one ^b Star differeth from another Star in Glory, yet ^c all his transgressions, that he hath committed, they shall not be Mentioned unto him: in his Righteousness that he hath done, he shall live. Though his Sins ^d be as Scarlet, they shall be as White as Snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool. ^e Seek ye therefore the Lord, while He may be found; Call ye upon Him, while He is near: Let the Wicked forsake his way, and the Unrighteous Man his thoughts; And let him return unto the Lord, and He will have Mercy upon him;

^a Ezek. xviii. 21. ^b 1 Cor. xv. 41. ^c Ezek. xviii. 22. ^d Isaiah i. 18. ^e Isaiah lv. 6, 7.

and to our God, for He will Abundantly pardon.

Thus the Sacred Scriptures everywhere give assurance, that if Ungodly Men have recourse to their Maker in a right manner and in due time, they shall then be forgiven, and like the Prodigal Son meet with a most Gracious Reception. But to make the least Delay is an infinite Risque and Hazard, and a Death-bed Repentance a case utterly Desperate. To a Death-bed Repentance no encouragement Can or May be given; for That were to defeat the Gospel of Christ, and make it of none effect. But as for Those, who are desirous instantly to return to their Duty while they are in Health and Strength, let not their Heart fail, nor their Hand be feeble; Let not even the truly formidable Strength of Evil Habit tempt them to Despondency, but rather

* Luke xv. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

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excite

excite their Diligence; For as Strong as it is, if they make a firm Resolution, and persist in it with all their Might, they shall certainly prevail. Whatsoever Difficulty there may be in the way, let them remember the Absolute Necessity to Break through. If they found their Mortal Life were in extreme peril, what would they not do to defend and preserve it? And with how much alacrity would they exert themselves upon a further Discovery, that nevertheless it was still in their power to procure their own Safety! And shall they then be less solicitous for their Eternal than their Temporal Welfare? for the Nobler Part of them than for the Corruptible Body?

That Honesty is the Best Policy, is a Saying which is generally known; And yet it is not so Common as it is Valuable and True. Thus having endeavoured, my Brethren, to set before You what a Good and a Bad Conscience

Conscience mean, I must leave it to your selves to choose, whether in imitation of St. Paul * you will herein exercise your selves, to have always a Conscience void of offence towards God and towards Men.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be rendred and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty, and Dominion both Now and for Evermore. Amen.

* Acts xxiv. 15, 16.



God and towards Man.
Conscience told of offence towards
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amine your fellow, whether in imi-
tation of man, I must leave it to

and for Evermore. Amen.

SERMON X.

The 12th Chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes and the 7th Verse.

The dust shall return to the Earth, as it was. And the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

THERE being few Subjects that abound with so much excellent Instruction as the Consideration of our Latter End, let us try what Good Lessons we can learn from it. Persons of a good Understanding who know what an important Subject this is, can never think it Superfluous or Disagreeable if they have been Versed in it ever so much; but are sensible that they cannot be too Often
put

put in mind of it. And as for the Illiterate and those that are unacquainted with this way of Thinking, it is highly Necessary they should be informed.

What I intend to offer at present, shall be reduced under the Two following Heads.

First; That our Mortality teaches us to moderate our Affections towards the things of this World. And

Secondly; to have a lively Remembrance of our Heavenly Father, and of the Duty, which we owe Him.

The first thing that our Mortality may teach us, is to moderate our Affections towards the things of this World. And this it behoves us to do, Because, First, they are full of Vanity and deceit, that is, They appear far greater in Imagination than they are in reality. Secondly they are mixed with a great deal of Evil,
and

and are sometimes quite lost in Trouble and Sorrow; which also they frequently produce, instead of giving the Satisfaction that was expected from them. And Thirdly (which is our proper Consideration at this time) If they were ever so Valuable, we must resign them e'er long. We should remember we are but ^a Travellers and Strangers upon Earth, as all our Fathers were. We have no Lasting Settlement or Property here, we have here no abiding ^b City, and never continue in one Stay. For we see all things about us perpetually Changing; And we ourselves undergo daily Alterations and are continually advancing towards the Greatest Change of all. Why then are we not possessed with a humble sense of our Condition? ^c Why do we enlarge our Desires, and can never be satisfied? Why are we not content with

^a Ps. xxxix. 12. ^b Heb. xiii. 14. ^c Hab. ii. 5.

that state of Life, which the Sovereign Disposer of all things hath allotted us? Alas! our Senses impose upon our Reason; we are taken with Shew and Outside, and carried away with the Appearances of things. We envy the Splendor of the Rich and the Great, but little think how many Mortifications and how much unhappiness they themselves are sensible of, and that many times their heart is full of Heaviness and Grief when they shine in the Richest Attire. But suppose they enjoy their Wealth, and that all things fall out as they could wish, * Yet this I say, Brethren, that the Time is short; It remaineth that they that Weep be as though they Wept not, and they that Rejoice as though they Rejoiced not, and they that Buy as though they possessed not: for the fashion of this World passeth away. He that lately appeared in the Great-

* 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

est Pomp and Grandeur, and dazzled the Eyes of the Beholders, perhaps the next time you light on him is in his Hearse or Tomb: He hath left all his Glory behind him, and his Body is become the food of Worms.

Since therefore we must quickly forego whatever we see, whatever we possess, whatever we look upon with a peculiar Pleasure, This shews that we have but a small Interest in the things of this World, since we shall not stay here long to enjoy them; And should therefore but lightly regard them, and allow them but little room in our Affections. This is the way to be Contented in a low fortune, This is the way to shelter our Virtue from furious Desires and Treacherous Temptations of Divers kinds: And this is the way to be Sober-minded in Prosperity, if it pleases God to call us thereto. Only let us serve Him, and Chearfully acquiesce in His appointment-

pointment, against which it is in vain to struggle and contend. Men that repine at the Dispensations of Providence, only forfeit their Ease and Virtue by so doing: It were infinitely better to resign themselves to the Will of God, who is Good and Gracious unto all, if our own perverseness doth not obstruct the Current of His Goodness to us.

It is a Fatal Mistake we are liable to, that we far Over-rate the things of this World. Alas! Happiness is not a Plant of Earthly Growth: Things are rather made easy and Tolerable here than Joyous and satisfactory, that we might learn neither to Love our Life nor hate it.

If then we are destitute of the Riches, Honours, or Pleasures of the World, let us not be uneasy at the want of such Transitory things; So shall we not fall into Temptation: Or if they are present with us, let us not be too much Elevated; for

for they hang by the slightest Thread, And we are always at a small Remove from Death.

But Secondly the Consideration of our Latter End ought to excite in us a Lively remembrance of our Heavenly Father, and of the Duty which we owe Him.

While we are upon Earth the things of this Life usually make a vigorous impression upon our Senses, And are many times apt to attract our whole Attention, especially if we live in Ease and Prosperity. We are so much engrossed either with Worldly Business or Pleasure, that in the mean time we are apt to forget the Invisible Hand that brought us into Being, and supports us in it; And that we must shortly Depart hence, whenever our Maker is pleased to Call us. But now when we reflect that we Live by His Gift and Sufferance, this teaches us to Revere and fear Him, and to be

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sensible

sensible of His Almighty Power on which we Depend. When we Consider that the present State of things is Transient and Continually changing; and that after a while Death will wholly remove these things from before our Eyes; and that then we must bid them farewell for ever; and that then also the Immortal Spirit returns unto Him that gave it; Such Reflections as these open our Eyes and awaken our Understanding, and we begin to be sensible^a that God is our Strength, and that the High God is our Redeemer; and that He is in truth our Heavenly Father and our God, and that our true home is in his Beatifick Presence: that our Primary Relation is to Him, whose Creatures and Servants we are, and with whom we shall for ever have to do; and that He is our most Valuable and Desirable Friend, and most Glorious Benefactor: but that

^a Psal. lxxviii. 35.

on the other hand his Displeasure is infinitely Formidable to the Wicked. When we think of these things, the fire of Divine Love kindles in our hearts; We disdain the vain and Perishing Deceits of the World which would withdraw us from our Duty, and long to tread his Courts among all the Brave and faithful Servants of God that have gone before us. And we bless the Coming Day, that will free us from Sin, Weakness, and Mortality. Thus doth the Consideration of our Latter End wean us from the World, and teach us to Revere and Love our Maker, and to know where our true Interest lies.

For things Temporal pass away like a Dream in the Night, but in God is our true and Lasting Happiness; He is the ^a Strength of our Heart, and our Portion for ever. And it is Good for us ^b to hold fast

^a Psal. lxxiii. 25.

^b Psal. lxxiii. 27.

by Him, and to place our Affections there.

When we Depart hence, we still continue under his Protection, and under the ^a Shadow of his Wings we shall be safe; His Divine Mercy and Goodness will defend and secure us. We must leave this World indeed, but it is in order to go unto Him ^b in whose Presence is fulness of Joy, and at whose Right hand are Pleasures evermore.

But to proceed, The Thoughts of our Dissolution do also train us up to a ready and undaunted Trust and Confidence in our Maker. For when we die, we surrender unto Him our Soul at discretion, which is then our All, being divested of every thing else; yet stript though it be, the Value of it is inestimable, Since by its means we are liable to intense and endless Happiness or Misery. When we die, I say, we

^a Psal. xxxvi. 7. ^b Psal. xvi. 11.

must resign this Immortal Spirit into our Maker's hands whether we will or no, to be disposed of in such manner as He thinks fit.

Now Wise and Good Men find it no Difficulty to deposite their Soul with Chearfulness in His hands, who was the Original Author and Father of it. It may seem indeed surprizing to exchange the Pleasures and Accommodations of this Life, which we are well acquainted with, for an Unknown State of Being: but Persons of a right Understanding easily overcome this Scruple, and are confident of the Divine Goodness, with very great reason.

For since God hath designed different kinds of Existence for his Rational Creatures, it is but consistent with the Creator's Wisdom and Glory that the Latter should exceed what went before. And again, Since even the Light of Nature tells

^a Heb. xii. 9.

us, that Virtue is to be Rewarded in a Future State, The Next Life must needs be Happier and more excellent than this. For if this were the more Eligible of the Two, that which follows could not be said to be a State of Rewards, but of Punishment and Penalty. For it would be a degradation from that which is Better to that which is Worse. Which is visibly Absurd.

The Wise and Good are therefore Undisturbed at the Great Change they are to make, and wholly confide in the Divine Goodness. They are fully persuaded, that As in this Life God is pleased to give sundry Demonstrations of His Power either to Bless or Punish, So in the Next Life He will exert that Power in a more ample manner than here He hath done. Now He shews us that He hath the power, and Then He will use it. They are fully persuaded, that He will reward his faithful

faithful Servants with many High felicities; It may be with excellent Faculties which we have not any Notion of at present, and doubtless with greater Degrees of Wisdom and Power, Nobler Employments, and a Serene State. This World is but as a Nursery to a Better.

Wherefore they that are wise, do according to St. Peter's instruction Commit the keeping of their Souls to God in Well-doing, as unto a Faithful Creator.

But now to resume that part of the Argument, which I had chiefly and primarily in view; Since, as I observed to You, whether Willing or Unwilling, we must of necessity trust our Maker ere long with our Immortal Soul (a Jewel of Unspeakable Price) we may from hence learn to trust Him in Lesser matters, namely in all the Concerns of this Mortal Life. And this Argument, if pur-

^a 1 Pet. iv. 19.

fued home, strikes at Sin in general. For every particular Sin is in effect a Distrust and disbelief of His Goodness to Reward and His Justice in Punishing; Which if a Man did not question, neither would he dare to Offend, nor would he neglect to render himself acceptable by Well-doing.

We have no reason to distrust God in the things of this Life. For He that made us, takes care of us, and will as certainly relieve us out of Trouble as He changes Tempestuous Weather into Sunshine. Vicissitudes are as much to be depended upon in Human Life as in the Weather.

Good Men see numberless reasons Chearfully to trust their Maker; even as many as there be Instances of His Goodness and Mercy to us. Difficulties, which surpass the limits of their Understanding, are however conquered by Humility and Faith.

For

For it is their sure Maxim, in all things to think Honourably of their Heavenly Father, infinitely the Best and Wifest of all Beings. Which is a Maxim, that we can never take too much Notice of.

In short, the Virtuous do that with Chearfulness and out of a principle of Duty, which Wicked Men do of force and Constraint. All must needs trust their Maker; for all are absolutely in His hand, to do unto them as it seemeth Him good. But the Difference is, that the Righteous offer up the acceptable Sacrifice of a Believing and Obedient Heart, but the Wicked dishonour Him in their thoughts and reprobate Life.

This Duty carries with it a present Reward; For how sweet is it to a Good Man to cast his Care upon Omnipotence, who careth for him! But it must be Observed, that

2 1 Pet. v. 7.

they

they only have a right to do this, who take care on their part to discharge their Duty. For otherwise their Trust instead of being genuine is no better than Superstition, Sloth, and Presumption, which God abhorreth. To have trust in God is the peculiar Privilege of the Righteous; The Wicked have nothing to do with it, unless they turn to Him by a Sincere Penitence and Amendment of Life; For except they do this, they can expect nothing else but Divine Vengeance and Indignation.

By a Generous Trust and Confidence Good Men do honour to God; and make their own Lives pleasant and easy to them; And when their time is come, depart hence with Peace and Comfort; and even with Raptures of Holy Joy upon their Death-bed. From which we may learn, what powerful effects this Virtue hath, and

and how great Satisfaction goes along with it, since it is able to sweeten death itself. In a word, No Man who thinks (And he is scarcely to be called a Rational Creature who doth not Think) No Man I say that Reflects and Thinks, can be otherwise than Miserable without Trust and Confidence in the Deity.

Finally, to put an end to this head, and therewith to the Present Discourse, We may further Observe, that the Mortality of the Human Race may teach us to be Thankful to Almighty God for the great Mercies of Life and Health, and that Death hath not as yet gained any Ground in our Mortal Body.

Human Life is as a tender Blossom, which easily falls to the ground. We are subject to Numberless Diseases, and to Violent Deaths, and Casualties of sundry kinds: And every Part of our frail Composition is obnoxious to its peculiar Maladies
and

and manifold Disorders. For we are brought into the World with a fixed and visible Design to be removed again out of it. Innumerable are the several ways of going out of the World; and not only the Ancient and the Decrepit, but likewise every Other Age, Manhood, Youth and Infancy are all of them liable to be Summoned. For in the World, in which we live, there be Thousands fall every day, and of all Ages some. We cannot but remember many of our Equals, Relations, and Acquaintance that have gone before: And it hath been Observed by the ^a Learned, that above Half, that are Born, Depart before they are Twenty. Should not those Persons therefore, whom God's gracious Providence hath led up to higher advances in Life, ^b be thankful to him for this His Mercy

^a Miscell. Cur. Vol. I. p. 299. ^b Psal. lxvi. 8. xciv. 18, 19. ciii. 2, 3, 4, 5.

and Loving kindness? Who hath preserved them in Health and suffereth not their feet to slip; Who satisfieth them with Years, and hath carried them through the Several Offices of Life: And continues unto them Opportunities of increasing in Grace and Favour with Him, and of procuring for themselves Greater Degrees of Honour and Felicity in His Kingdom.

Certainly this Reflection ought to fill them with Gratitude; and to make them the more Considerate and Wise, in proportion as their Age increases; and to excite their Zeal and Vigilancy in Serving Him. For they, ^a to whom much hath been Given, ought to love much.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

^a Luke vii. 41, 42, 43.

SERMON

and loving kindness. Who have
preferred them in Heaven and
earth not their feet to this? Who
satisfied them with tears and pain
carried them through the severest
Ordeal of Life: And conveys us
to their Opportunities of increasing
in Grace and Favour with Him, and
of procuring for themselves Greater
Degrees of Honour and Felicity in
His Kingdom.
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make them the more God-fearing
and true in proportion as their
Advantages; and to excite their
Faith and Vigilance in serving
Him. For they, to whom much
has been given, ought to love
Him more.
Now unto the King eternal, in-
visible, the only wise God,
be Honour and Glory for ever and
ever. Amen.

SERMON XI.

The 12th Chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes and the 7th Verse.

The dust shall return to the Earth, as it was. And the Spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

IT is impossible, we should be too perfect in this Lesson of our Mortality: let us now refresh our Memory, and make further Improvement in this Contemplation.

First then; It takes off our Affections from Earthly Things, and is a Counterballance to the Several Temptations, which the World sets before our View.

For what are all these transitory things to me (may any one say) which

if they do not forsake me first, I must soon pass from hence and leave behind me? Though it is what we are prone to, yet it is certainly a Great Folly for a Man to set his Affections upon what he hath little interest in: it is a Weakness which must not be indulged, but checked and Corrected. Shall I for the sake of such paltry and fleeting Trash forfeit my Peace of Mind by imbroiling it with tumultuous Passions, and wounding it with a Sense of Guilt? And shall I alienate myself from my Heavenly Father, upon whom is my Everlasting Dependence, and to whom I shall go, when these things shall be no more?

Thus the Consideration of our Latter End preserves us from Open Violence and evil Devices, and from Injustice of every kind upon the account of Ambition, Riches, or Sensuality.

Secondly ;

Secondly; The same Consideration, as it preserves Men from Injustice, that they will make no Acquisitions by Unrighteous means; So likewise it preserves them from a Sordid Covetousness, by teaching them to open their hand, when Mercy and Charity require they should part with the Superfluities they can very well spare. ^a Charge them that are Rich (says St. Paul to Timothy) that they do Good, that they be Rich in Good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Every Rich Man hath Opportunities of shewing his Zeal for the Honour of God by doing Good in the World, and of shewing his Love to Mankind, Without any prejudice at all to himself or Family. If therefore he complies with these opportunities, then with the greatest Ease and Safety to Himself and His he lays up Treasure for himself

^a 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18.

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in Heaven, and recommends his Posterity and nearest Friends to the favour of Providence; his Estate descends to them and a Blessing along with it.

But if the Wealthy Person is of so Cruel and Sordid a disposition, that he will not part with any Superfluity, how much soever it may be wanted elsewhere, What is the Consequence? he must one day leave all his Hoarded Wealth behind him. And if so, how is he the better for it? What good will it all do him, when he is Dead? It will only sink him the deeper in perdition.

By the way, though the Poor cannot claim a Man's Charity as though he were indebted to them, Nor are permitted by Laws Divine or Human to help themselves by Force or Clandestine Theft, Yet on the other hand Uncharitable Men may so far be said to Defraud the Poor, as they hold back from them the Relief,

2

which

which pursuant to the Will of God they ought to have.

God permits Poverty to be in the World for this very Reason, that there may be room for the exercise of Humanity and Beneficence.

But Thirdly; If a person hath a mind to be Charitable rather than Luxurious, let such a one also have an Eye upon that which will One Day befall him.

As the World now goes, the Great Christian Virtue Charity is in a very languid condition through the prevalence of Covetousness on the one hand and Luxury on the other. The Covetous Man will not relieve his Distressed Brethren, and the Luxurious Person so disables himself that he cannot. It would be happy, if the Latter of the Two would use the Understanding God hath endued him with, and reason in this manner. Why do I follow ill Examples, and indulge my self in this Pride

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of Life, and squander away what ought to be set apart for better uses? When my Maker expects I should be a Water-spring to refresh his wearied Servants in the heat of their Affliction (for there are many Brave and Virtuous Persons in Distress) why am I found to be as a Rock or flint? Is this my Gratitude to Him who giveth me richly all things to enjoy? And am I so Grossly degenerated from the Spiritual Nature as to seek my Ultimate Happiness in this Life? Do not I believe, that God hath reserved far better things and much greater felicity for those that love Him, than can be met with any where here below? Why then do I over-prize this Changeable World, and its Vain, Treacherous, and Perishing pleasures at such an extravagant rate, as for the sake of them to trample upon my Duty towards God and Man? Ere long I

* 1 Tim. vi. 17.

shall

shall follow the generations of my Fathers, and this pampered Body be content with other sort of Accommodations and undergo the Greatest Alteration in Nature: Why then am I so taken up with the Love of the present Dreams? Let me do Good while I have it in my power, and thank God for the glorious opportunities he bleſſes me with, and by making a right uſe of them make good my Title to true and Subſtantial joys in the Beatifick Preſence of the Deity. But if I am reſolved to walk according to the Sight of my Eyes in contempt of the Superior intelligences and dictates of Reaſon, And am determined to follow the Deluſions of Imagination and my own perverſe Will rather than the Will of God, What can I expect, but that for all theſe things He will bring me into Judgment, and pu-

† Eccleſ. xi. 9.

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nish my shameful Ingratitude to Him with suitable indignation?

Fourthly; The Contemplation, we are engaged in, Encourages the Christian Temper of a Readiness to Forgive, which also is a part of Charity.

When Death approaches, Men see things in another Light than they did before; For their fiery Spirits are then damped, their Pride brought down, and a full sense of their Weakness is upon them, that Man in this Life is ^a like unto Vanity, being as a Shadow that passes away. And the Attractions of this World, which lately were so strong upon them, cease; and they stand within the Power and Confines of the Other. For when Men are upon the point to leave this World and All things therein, all fuel of Contention and Variance is then taken away; and they become Ready

^a Psal. cxliv. 4.

enough

enough to acquiesce in that Divine Declaration in the Old and New Testament, * Vengeance belongeth to Me, I will repay, saith the Lord. When the Revengeful person perceives the fatal Hour is at hand, he finds cause to be heartily Sorry for all his Deviations from the Will of God, and is deeply sensible he hath already offended much too far both against God and Man, instead of wishing he had carried any Resentments further.

Since therefore the Approach of Death damps the most fiery Spirit, and puts an end to all Piques, feuds, and resentments, why will not Men sacrifice them a little sooner, and lay them down forthwith, since it would be so much to their Advantage? They would then acquit themselves like Rational Men, and Obedient Servants of God; and their present Tranquillity and Interest would be

* Deut. xxxii. 35.

Rom. xii. 19.

consulted. For is not Peace and Agreement pleasanter than Enmity and Discord? and is it not more advantageous to be without Enemies than to have them? There is a Desirable Calmness and Serenity of Mind that accompanies the practice of the Christian Duty of Forgiveness. But the misfortune is, that we little reflect how much pleasanter it is to Conquer a Wicked Passion, and be Conscious of having acted in a Wise manner, than it is to Give way, or Be led Captive by it. Certainly the high Spirit of irreconcilable Aversion or utter Disdain ill suits the low state of Mortality.

But let it not from hence be imagined, that I advise any man to be Unguarded against the Artful Designs of any one, that may be prompted by Covetousness or Malice to devour him. For true Charity doth not exclude Prudence; but they are
very

very consistent with each other. Let persons of Integrity be reconciled and Forgive, but let them also take care of themselves in a base and Deceitful World: I do not advise them against this.

Fifthly; The Prospect of Mortality checks every Vain and extravagant Thought, and Shews how absurd and unnatural is Pride in Man!

If the High Estate of the Rich and Mighty were independent and perpetual, and no Power whatever could dispossess them, then indeed they might have cause to be Elevated in their own Conceit. But as their Case is quite Otherwise, it is Good for them to Remember they are but Men. It is therefore St. Paul's advice to them, * That they be not high-minded nor trust (ἐπὶ πλούτῳ ἀδηλότῃ) in transient Wealth, but in the Living God; that is to say, who liveth for Ever and Ever, and is the Source of Being unto all. For the

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Supreme Being hath only intrusted them for a while, and they are Removable at his pleasure, and will shortly be reduced to a Level with the lowest of Mankind, the meanest Servant or the poorest Peasant that breaths. For the Body, they are Cloathed with, how much so ever its Extraction may be boasted of, is derived from the Common parent Earth; And thither again will be its Dissolution, and such will be the final Event of all their Grandeur. The Painful Release—the grim and hideous Aspect—the Putrefying Remains—the Bed of Earth—the Feast of Worms—What do we think is the Meaning of all these and of our short stay in this World, but to curb and restrain Man's licentiousness, and to fix a Sense of Awe upon his Mind and keep him Humble?

Let a Man therefore think of the Day that is coming, which will strip him of the Advantages he enjoys

joys above other Men, and will entirely quash whatever it may be that now tempts him to Pride; And this will teach him Humility and Moderation towards his Inferiors. And the Dishonourable Circumstances, in which ere long he must leave his Body to be committed to the Ground, will not suffer him to have too high an Opinion of himself.

Sixthly; the Contemplation of Mortality extinguishes Envy, and produces Contentment with the Portion that is allotted us.

Envy is so Troublesome a Passion, and such a torture to the Soul, that a Good Antidote against it must needs be very Valuable; And such a one the Contemplation of Mortality affords. For how much soever any Man may have got the start of you in any respect, be it Wealth, or Superiority of Station, or any Worldly happiness whatever, a few years will make you equal to him as to
that

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that which now excites your Envy;
He will soon be entirely bereft of
the Advantage he enjoys above you,
as though it had never been at all;
it will be utterly abolished, utterly
cancelled and disannulled, as though
it had never been.

The Difference therefore between
the Mighty and the Ignoble, the
Rich and the Poor, The Old The
Young, The Strong The Weak,
The Prosperous and the Unfortu-
nate is only for a while; It is of no
long continuance. " If it doth not
cease immediately it is sure to end
with Life. It is a Difference that
can only exist for a few years, And
that is a Term that every Wise Man
knows how to look beyond.

* Do not therefore disquiet your
self when one is made Rich, when
the glory of his house is increased;
for when he dieth, his glory shall
not descend after him. For ^b we

^a Psal. xlix, 16, 17.

^b 1 Tim. vi. 7.

brought

brought nothing into this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Riches and Honours will not follow us into the Other World; Only Religion and Virtue will be of Service to us then, and recommend us to our Saviour and our God. The more Virtuous Man will then be the more Exalted.

Seventhly; The Consideration of the Day, that is Coming, suggests Patience to Good Men in the Troubles they meet with, and is a Ground of Hope to them under the worst Calamities.

It is the Great Privilege of the Righteous to have at all times a Trust in Almighty God, who brought them into Existence, and will as assuredly direct them Happily therein, as they Obediently follow the Guidance which He gives them by the Natural Light of their Understanding, and by the Sacred Scriptures. The Righteous are ne-

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ver destitute and devoid of Hope. When therefore their Virtues are exercised with the Troubles and Inconveniences of Life, which ruffle and discompose them for the present, they have this Reflection to relieve them in the mean time, that though ^a Heaviness may endure for a little while, joy will quickly ensue.

Or if the Righteous Man is touched with Disasters of another kind, which are something more than the ordinary Vicissitudes of Life, and the pressure whereof is great, and Remedy scarce to be expected on this side the Grave, Even then it is a Comfort to him that they cannot last always. His Troubles and Afflictions, be they great or small, must certainly end with Life, if not before; He knows they can continue no longer. His Prospect is all Bright and Glorious beyond.

But it is otherwise with the Wicked Man, who, when pressed

^a Psal. xxx. 5.

with

with grievous Calamities, hath nothing to support him, And can see no end of his Sufferings, but his case is altogether Dismal and Black.

But one may say to the Virtuous Man, when he is in his utmost Distress, Or his own Conscience may say, Courage, Good Man ! * The God whom thou servest and hast sought in the Sincerity of thy heart, His Goodness watcheth over thee, to preserve thee. Lo ! there is an Asylum at hand, A sure infallible Retreat, from which You are not far off. Persist in Well-doing, for you are near the Reward of all your Virtues.

Eighthly ; As the Consideration of Mortality suggests Patience to Good Men, So also it inspires them with Undaunted Constancy and Courage, when they are molested or opposed in the performance of their Duty.

Patience is a Necessary Virtue in this Mortal State, and it must be

confessed that in sharp Trials it is
 a Great and Arduous one; and un-
 doubtedly Great will be its Reward.
 But when a Man suffers for his At-
 tachment and firm Adherence to
 Virtue, and because he will not let
 go his Innocence, This Man's for-
 titude hath the advantage of a pecu-
 liar Lustre; and he wins a Distin-
 guished Palm and Superior Felicity.
 There is something very Glorious
 and Heroic in such a Man's Con-
 duct; he acts the part of a Christian
 of the first Rank, and stands in the
 first Class of Christ's Disciples. ^a But
 and if ye suffer for Righteousness
 sake (says the Apostle) Happy are ye.
 The Reason is, because as your Fi-
 delity and Obedience is Eminent,
 so also will the Recompence of it
 be. And such Christian Bravery
 as this may a Man learn from a due
 Consideration of Mortality. For as
 on the one hand the Allurements

^a 1 Pet. iii. 14.

of Sin and the Wages of Unrighteousness will be soon lost and gone, Though the ill Consequences of it are durable and permanent ; So also on the other hand the Discouragements of Virtue, and Distresses endured for its sake will soon be over, but the Good Effects of it will be lasting and Eternal. Just was the Sentiment of the Good Old Roman, when he expressed himself in these or the like words, Mortality prevents any Irresolution in my Breast ; A man must die, that is Certain ; And whether Basely or Honourably is the only Choice he hath to make.

—Timido, fortique cadendum est.

But how highly doth Christianity exalt and improve the Argument ; * Be faithful unto Death (says our Saviour) and I will give you a Crown of Life !

* Rev. ii. 10.

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Yet

Yet it behoves men to take care that their Zeal be exerted in a Just and Weighty Cause, lest they should be guilty of heinous Errors, as for instance ^a St. Paul was before his Conversion, who thought he was doing God service, while he was persecuting the Church of God.

Ninthly; The Consideration of our Latter End is a Main Support of Virtue in General. For it both shews the Necessity of a Virtuous Life, and likewise affords very great Assistance in the pursuance of it.

That the Contemplation of what we shall shortly be affords very great Assistance in the pursuit of Virtue, appears from what hath been already said. For it both rectifies the Judgment, and also bridles the Passions. It rectifies the Judgment by curing us of our false Opinions of Things Temporal and of all Worldly Ad-

^a Gal. i. 13, 14, 15, &c. Phil. iii. 6. 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10. 1 Tim. i. 12, 13, &c.

vantages, and by shewing us the Vanity and Small Value of them. The Imagination is apt to magnify These things in a very Extravagant manner; And a Man, that is under this Deception, cannot but exceedingly Admire and Vehemently desire them. Here then is a Bias given to the Soul, of which it is hard to say whether it be more Strong or more Fatal and Hurtful.

Non, qui Sidonio contendere calli-
 dus ostro
 Nescit Aquinatem potantia vellera
 fucum,
 Certius accipiet damnum, propiusve
 medullis,
 Quam qui non poterit vero distin-
 guere falsum.

If a Man should take it in his head to be a Dealer in Jewels without knowing a Diamond from a Bristol Stone, he would not smart so se-

verely for his ignorance and Folly,
 as he that cannot distinguish Counter-
 feit happiness from True. And
 if a Heathen and Epicurean had just
 Grounds for this way of Thinking,
 how much more we Christians, who
 hope for things Immortal and far
 Better than the Present! Things Pre-
 sent may deceive the Foolish with
 their empty Shew; but a Confide-
 rate Man hath an eye upon the
 Day that is advancing towards him;
 Which therefore is of excellent use
 to him by laying a Restraint upon
 his Passions. When Death comes, it
 puts a final Stop to Ambition, En-
 mity, Avarice and Voluptuousness;
 It frustrates and avenges all the
 boundless and unlimited Passions of
 Men: And to have it frequently in
 Mind is a very good Method to keep
 our selves Composed and Sedate;
 to keep us free from Sudden Gusts
 and internal Storm and Uproar.
 Wherefore the Poet's admonition
 doth

doth again deserve notice, and there is greater reason to receive it, than he himself imagined.

Inter spem, curamque, timores inter,
 & iras
 Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse
 supremum.

Which in English Metre may be
 rendred as follows,

'Midst all your Cares, and Hopes,
 and Fears, and Wrath
 Think ev'ry Day, that rises, is your
 last.

Be thus much therefore sufficient to shew, that the Consideration of our Latter End affords very great Assistance in the Practice of Virtue; Since it teaches us to make a Right estimation of things, and is a forcible Restraint upon the Passions.

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But moreover it likewise shews the Necessity of a Virtuous Life.

For since we are continually liable to the Stroke of Death, we ought to be in constant Readiness to meet it; for we ought always to be prepared for that which may befall us at any time. No Wise Man will trust any thing of moment to the Uncertainties of Life, if it is in his Power to help it; Much less will he expose his Salvation to such Hazards, which is an affair of infinitely greater consequence to him than any thing else can be. For as Death is Universal, and to every one of us Certain and Sure; so on the other hand Life is very Uncertain. A Man ought never to flatter himself with the foolish hopes, that he hath a great many Years to live in the World; since Death is ever employing his Shafts promiscuously upon the Old and Young. And a person that enjoys the most flourishing and
vigorous

vigorous Health, is not sure of another Year; No, not of another Day. We know not how soon it may be our own Turn; how small the number may be of the Days that are left us. It is therefore the Greatest Madness, when Men postpone the Practice of Virtue and defer it to some time hereafter. For to live as becomes Rational Creatures, that is to say Virtuously, is the End for which it pleased God to bring us into the World, and ought to be Constantly pursued. And what a superlative Neglect, what fatal Misconduct is that Man guilty of, who when Death closes his Eyes, is found to have left the Business, for which he came into the World, undone? and to have miscarried in his Highest and most important Interest!

When we venture to live in a state of rebellion and disobedience against God, what security can we have in the mean while, that death will not

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surprise us in the midst of our Sins and Wickedness? What security can we have against the Natural Distempers, and a thousand Violent Accidents, to which Life is continually exposed? For people are frequently summoned, when they little apprehended any such thing, and expected an Addition perhaps of a great many Years. A Man, that indulges himself in a course of Sin and Wickedness, cannot therefore be sure of Life; nor can he be sure that he shall have Grace to amend the Evil of his Ways, if he doth live. But on the contrary his present Presumption, and Contemptuous Treatment of the Divine Spirit, which ^a will not always bear with indignities, And the Altering and Corrupting nature of Sin, and ^b prevailing power of Custom and Evil Habit render it very improbable, that he will Ever be Reclaimed. Such unspeakable

^a Gen. vi. 3. Eph. iv. 30. ^b Jerem. xiii. 23.

Hazards do Men run by their Delays and Backwardness to serve their Gracious Maker!

Besides, how can a Man of any Thought and Reflection enjoy even the Present Life, if he is not prepared for Futurity? Here am I living a Wicked life (may such a one say) and do not know how soon I may be surpris'd with Death; and then I am Infinitely Miserable! And how can such a one grapple with Misfortunes and Calamities, which are so frequent in the World, who hath neither Hopes in God, nor any reliance upon a Better State of Existence than the Present? If a Heavy and Lasting Calamity befalls him, what Refuge hath he left, who throws away all Hopes of Future Bliss, and all Prospect of Deliverance by the benefit of Mortality, And hath so managed things that he can only expect that Death will augment his Woe! In a word, A Man's Happiness

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piness and Ease in This World require, that he should be prepared for Death; and his Salvation in the Other depends upon it entirely.

Since therefore the Consideration of the Mortality, we are liable to, shews the Necessity of a Virtuous Life, and since it affords very great Assistance in the pursuit of Virtue, we may from hence conclude, that it is a Main Support of Righteousness and Goodness in the World, and is intended to be so by our Almighty Creator.

Tenthly; The Contemplation of the Great Change, we are to undergo, lifts up the Mind above the World and the Vanities of it, and teaches us to set our Affections upon things Above.

Since our frail Body will soon return to the Earth, as it was, and be resolved into its first Principles, And since the Better Part of us will return unto God who gave it, This shews
the

the Absurd folly of an insatiable Thirst after immoderate and superfluous Wealth, and the transient Vanity of Human Honours, and what gross ignorance it is to be bewitched with the love of Sensual pleasure. God himself is the true Centre of a Spiritual Creature's Love, such as is the Soul of Man. He is infinitely more excellent than any Object in Earth or Heaven; And knows this, that nothing can make you so Happy as His Favour, which therefore is to be preferred above all things.

The Body is Brute Matter taken from the Earth, and thither it will return again; But the Soul is of Heavenly Extraction and comes from the Eternal * Father of Spirits, and is Immortal. Since therefore the Soul is so far superior to the Body in Dignity and Excellence, consequently Greater pleasures belong

* Heb. xii. 9.

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to the Soul than to the Body; And the Spiritual and Heavenly joys prepared for the Virtuous in a Future State far surpass any thing that Corruptible Flesh and Blood can pretend to. This is as certain, as that an Angel is more Advanced and more Excellent than a Brute. Add hereunto, that God himself, the Supreme and most Happy of all Beings, is a Spirit.

Since therefore this World is a not our Home, but we are continually journeying towards Heaven, where so much Better things are prepared for us, We ought to have it in our Thoughts, and our Aims ought to tend that way. We ought frequently to delight ourselves with the Hopes of a Happy Change hereafter, and of seeing God, whose Name be blessed Evermore. For when we have left this World, and are entred into the World of Spirits,

^a Heb. xi. 16.

what

what Wonders shall then be opened to our View! Many and Great will there doubtless be, which it is impossible we should conceive or be acquainted with at present. And how transporting are those, which are already Revealed to us! Is it a small thing, do we think, to have the honour to see the most Exalted and at present Invisible Beings, and to see every Brave and Heroic Personage that hath at any time lived upon Earth, All that have been truly Great and Good, And to be enrolled a Fellow-Citizen with them, and live with them for Ever! But infinitely above all what unspeakable Felicity will it be to view the Glorious Majesty of the Eternal King our God! charmed with the Glories of His Presence! ravished with the Sweetness of His Love! To dwell with whom is to dwell with Wisdom and Happiness. And shall a

* 1 Tim. i. 17.

Christian,

Christian, who entertains such Glorious Hopes as these, forfeit them for any of the Trifles of this World?

Be thus much sufficient to shew, that the Prospect of our Dissolution teaches us to be Heavenly-minded, and to raise our Thoughts to that blessed State, which we hope to be one Day promoted to.

I have now Discourfed at some Length to make us sensible, that the Consideration of our Mortality is a Main Support of Virtue in the World; that it shews the Necessity of a Virtuous Life, and contributes very Great Assistance thereto: And particularly that it is an Antidote against an immoderate and inordinate Love of the World, and Counter-ballances the Temptations to Injustice, Sordid Covetousness, Luxury, a Revengeful Temper, Pride, and Envy, and promotes the Practice of the Contrary Duties. And that it teaches Good Men to be Patient and full of Hope
in

in the time of Trouble, and Courageous and Resolved in the time of Danger or Persecution. And that it invites us to shake off every mean and Degenerate Thought, and aspire to Heavenly Things, and place our Affections upon them.

I should not have neglected to say, that Since we must shortly trust God with the Disposal of us in the Other World, we should learn hence (in a steady Performance of our Duty) to confide in Him at all times. And that since He is the Arbiter of Life and Death, we ought to fear Him on whom our Life depends, and to Love him as from Him we receive it. I should not have neglected to insist upon these things, but that I think it unnecessary to add any thing further to what hath been already said with reference to these Propositions in the Last Discourse.

I shall

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I shall now conclude the Important Subject with illustrating this Final Observation, that Only the Wicked have reason to be afraid of death.

The Only true Sting of Death is the apprehension of the Recompence that is due to a Wicked Life, when Vice and injustice have been preferred to Righteousness and Virtue: The Consequences of which Evil Choice must necessarily be pernicious, as surely as the World is under the Government of a Wise and Holy Ruler. For if the Supreme Being did not distinguish between those that do well and those that do evil, it is plain He would exercise no Government at all, and would not upon that Supposition be (as He certainly is) the tremendous Judge and King of all the World, but a mere Epicurean Deity, regardless of Mankind whom He hath created. Tho', to do the Epicureans justice, as they denied Him to be the Governor of
the

the World, they denied Him likewise as Creator; and were very Consistent with themselves in so doing: For these Principles of theirs are very suitable to each other, though horridly false both of them. But to return; The Sting of Death (as St. Paul truly tells us) is Sin. Whatsoever else there be in it, that looks hideous and frightful, is scarce any thing more than a harmless Mask and dreadful in Appearance only. What is it then that startles us? Is it the Pain of Departing? But some have an easy Dismission; and if they had not, yet This is so Timorous and mean an Objection, that a Man may be ashamed of it, since without Pain we were not brought into the World. Will the Body then be laid in the Grave? But it is become a senseless piece of Earth: The Inhabitant is fled. A Man disgraces his Understanding, and hath too

1 Cor. xv. 56.

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low

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low Conceptions of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, who is troubled with such Scruples as This. For do we find, that the Best of Men are exempted from Death? Let us rise upon the Wings of Contemplation, and take a View of the World with Reason's eye. Will not all its innumerable Inhabitants be gone in something more than a Century? How few of them will continue so long! How many of them will be departed in Twenty Years time, or in Seven, and their places occupied by Others! All former Generations have departed hence; The Present and all Succeeding Generations must do the same. The Highest Stations fare equally alike with the Vulgar. And it is no more than what Many of your Relations and Friends have done before you. An Honest Man therefore cannot reasonably be afraid to walk off the Stage in the midst of so much Good
Com-

Company, as is continually departing hence, and exchanging this World for a Better. Depart a Man inevitably must ere long; And therefore Now or a few years hence to him, that is Prepared, and Passive to the Will of God, can be no Great Difference. If he foregoes the Enjoyments and Comforts of this Life, To Ballance this, he hath likewise his manumission from the Troubles and Afflictions of it. For we must not think, that this World is designed to be a Paradise. All things about us are Mixt, Empty, Uncertain, Transitory: and we our selves consist of Mortal Bodies and Mutable Minds; Diseases infect the one, and Passions and Ignorance afflict the other. He that reflects how much Folly and Wickedness there is in the World, and how much Misery and Sorrow, may easily cure himself of too great a fondness for it. One need only consult the An-

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nals of his own Memory, and therein take a review of the Years, which he hath already passed, in order to see that he hath no great cause to be abundantly enamoured with this Present State. If a Man is Elevated to day, there is a Vicissitude which runs through Life, and he knows not what To Morrow may produce. But when a Good Man is called to his Ultimate Sanctuary, let him know that he is then to be delivered from all the Distresses and Troubles of Life, from the Maladies of the Body, from the Cruelty of other Men, and from his own Imperfections. Even the ^{*}Heathen Writers had so much Understanding as to rank our Dissolution among the Benefits of Nature, being a certain Release from the Ruins and Devastations, which, if a man lives, Age infallibly produces in his Tenement of Clay. And

^{*} Spatium vitæ extremum inter munera ponat Naturæ. Juv. Sat. 10. ver. 358.

can Christians then be insensible of their Maker's Goodness and Clemency in this Matter? But why do I dwell so much upon these things? Since as surely as Virtue is dear to the Most Wise and Holy God, there is Happiness reserved for the Virtuous in a Future State: And consequently the Great Change is to them an Object of Joyful Hope and not of Fear.

But as for those that live a Wicked Life, let them look to it; ^a for there is no Peace (says my God) to the Wicked; They must even abide the Fatal, the Horrid Consequences of their heinous Sins and Follies. If they are desirous to be delivered from the amazing fears of Death, and from the insupportable terrors of the Condemnation of the Great and Righteous Judge, there is no other Rational way that they can take, but to Amend their Lives,

^a Isaiah xlviii, 22. lvii. 21,

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and instantly and without Delay to
return to God and to their Duty.

Now unto God most Wise, Ho-
ly, and Just, by whose power we
Live, Move, and have our Being,
From whom we have our Present
Existence and to whom we shall re-
turn, Be rendred and ascribed, as is
most due, all Glory, Honour, and
Thanks, all Might, Dominion, and
Majesty both Now and for Evermore.
Amen.



SERMON

SERMON XII.

Upon our Saviour's Nativity.

The 2d Chapter of St. Luke, and
the latter part of the 10th toge-
ther with the 11th Verse.

---Behold I bring you good
tidings of Great Joy, which
shall be to All People.
For unto you is Born this
Day in the City of Da-
vid, a Saviour which is
Christ the Lord.

I Have so great a Subject to speak
of at this time, that it is no won-
der if I am oppressed and over-
powered with the weight of it. To
have so Glorious a Subject to treat of,

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doth indeed kindle a desire to maintain the Dignity of it, but at the same time is enough to make any one despair of doing so. This High Festival of our Blessed Saviour's nativity hath through all Ages ever since been Celebrated in a most Solemn and Sacred manner: Justin Martyr one of the most Ancient Fathers calls it the Queen of all the Days in the Year. It is a Day that will be for ever Dear, ever Joyful and Sacred to Those who have any regard for the Honour of their God, the Prevalence of Religion and Virtue in the World; the Welfare of Mankind; and the Blessed Hopes of immortality, when this Vain transitory Life is over.

I shall confine my self to the Two following Heads. First I shall speak concerning the Day it self. Secondly I shall shew what our behaviour ought to be.

First

First therefore I am to speak concerning the blessedness of the Day it self.

This Day we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who was born into the World, as Almighty God was pleased to pre-signify^a in the very infancy of the Creation, and afterwards revealed more and more by a long Series of Holy Prophets continued down to the very Times of our Saviour.

The Reason of our Saviour's coming into the World was to deliver Mankind from the Gross Ignorance and Diabolical Wickedness and Idolatry, with which the World was Overspread; and to Convert them to the knowledge and Worship of the True God, and to the practice of Holy Virtues acceptable unto Him: Our Saviour introduced among us that Religion which alone is the

^a Gen. iii. 15.

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True, which alone is the most Pure of all Religions which are in the World or can be: He ^a redeemed us from our Sins, He opened a way for us into the Kingdom of Heaven, making us, if we will ourselves, Members of Christ and Sons of God, who before were lying under the Sentence of eternal death, and doomed to utter Perdition, being Abominable and Disinherited Children, the Objects of our Heavenly Father's curse and everlasting Displeasure.

The manner of our Saviour's coming in the Flesh was to Outward appearance very Obscure, so destitute of Worldly Pomp and Grandeur, that He ^b had not where to lay his Head, but the Manger was His Cradle. For his Kingdom was not of this World, but he was desirous with infinite condescension to ani-

^a Eph. v. 2. 1 Pet. iii. 18. Titus ii. 14.

^b Luke ii 7, 12. 16.

mate and encourage the Meanest of his Followers, and to fortify those by His Example, who are placed in the Hardest Circumstances of Life.

So very Obscure and Humble was the Birth of our Saviour to the Eyes of this World! Yet at the same time to the Eyes of the Other World it was extremely illustrious. For as on the one hand he was attended with Mean Shepherds: So on the other he was attended likewise with the Highest Angels. There was a Cloud placed between the Glory of our Saviour and the Sight of Mankind, but behind that Cloud He shone forth with Unchanged, Undiminished and inexpressible Lustre.

Having been conceived in a Miraculous Manner by the Power of the Holy Ghost, he was born of the Virgin Mary who was of the Seed of Abraham, in pursuance of the Promise which God made to

^a Luke ii. 13.

I

that

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that Patriarch, who was a Man so Greatly Good, that as the Apostle notes concerning Him, ^a he was called the Friend of God. Our Saviour descended likewise from the Regal Family of David, the Man after God's own Heart; And the place of his Nativity was Bethlehem, being the City where David lived, before he was advanced to the Court as afterwards to the Sceptre of Israel. The Jews among whom our Saviour was Born, though they were a very Refractory and disobedient People, were however the Only People that were honoured with divine Revelation, though such as was only a Type and Shadow of That, which blessed be God we now enjoy. Christianity is the Last, Best, and Complete Declaration of God's Will, and is, as it is called in the Book of the Prophet Daniel, ^b the Everlasting Righteousness. The

^a James ii. 23,

^b Dan. ix. 24.

Jews therefore, in whose Country our Blessed Saviour was born, had, though imperfectly, the Knowledge of the True God; While the Gentiles (a few choice Spirits excepted) suffered a total Eclipse, and lay plunged in the Blackest Superstition and Idolatry,

Gracious God! what a Blessed Alteration is produced in This very Island since Augustus his time, when Horace stigmatized the Britons for their Savageness, and Barbarity in that noted Line of his,

Vilam Britannos hospitibus feros.

Which verse intimates, that the Traveller was in imminent danger of being destroyed, that set his foot upon Britain. How are we reclaimed (Thanks to the Great Author and Finisher of our Salvation) since the time, when like other Nations

Heb. xii. 2,

in

in those days of ignorance, or like the Wild Indians at present, we took delight in committing Murder and spilling Human Blood, As if the Image of God had not been impressed upon the Soul of Man! How are the Eyes of our Understanding opened and enlightned by the Sun of Righteousness since the Days, when with strange Stupidity we worshipped Stocks and Stones, and sacrificed to the abominable Images of Flint and Woden and the like! Before the Birth of our Saviour what Detestable and Unworthy Notions of God abounded in the World, and prevailed among the Politest Nations then in Being! There was nothing so Lewd and Hateful but it was countenanced with the example of their Chief Idol Jupiter, and the rest of their false Deities: And no wonder then if the people were corrupted (as St. Paul tells us in the first Chapter to the Romans) and abandoned

doned themselves to those impurities, in the practice of which they did but imitate the false Objects of their Worship. Even God's peculiar people the Jews were at that time strangely Over-run with a torrent of Iniquity and Wickedness, ^a for which they felt the Severe Vengeance of God's Hand, when they suffered unspeakable Miseries at the destruction of their City and Temple. For what their Character was when our Saviour came into the World, the Apostle hath expressly shewed, when he tells us, ^b that they were all gone out of the way of God's Commandments, and were altogether become Unprofitable, although they had the Oracles of God in their possession. When Mankind had reduced themselves to this desperate State, and were undone by the Fall of our First Parents, God

^a Matt. xxiii. 37. xxiv. 2, 7, &c. ^b Rom. iii. 12, 2.

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of his infinite Mercy and Goodness (as He had fore-ordained from the beginning of the World) sent his Son, the Eternal Word of the Father, to redeem us from our Sins, to be a Ransom for us, and to reconcile the World unto Himself. This was the Origin, this the *Æra* of the Christian Religion; This was the Birth-day of the High-Messiah! Then did Mercy and Truth meet together, then did Righteousness and Peace kiss each other. Then did Truth spring out of the Earth, and Righteousness looked down from Heaven! Then was proclaimed by an innumerable multitude of Celestial Heralds, *Glory to God in the Highest, and on Earth Peace, Good Will towards Men!* For now did God in Gracious compassion to Mankind begin to fill the Earth with the Know-

^a Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11.

^b Luke ii. 13, 14.

ledge of the Lord, ^a as the Waters cover the Sea. Now was the ^b Prince of Peace born, our Glorious Redeemer, and powerful Mediator with God, reconciling the World unto Him. It is owing to the Blessings of this Day, that the nature of every Holy Virtue is perfectly displayed, and the Great Truths of Christianity exposed to our View, and every Motive to our Duty urged home and fully insisted upon. For our Blessed Saviour hath instructed us by his Divine Doctrine and unspotted example to honour Almighty God with the utmost powers of the Soul; And to pay Dutiful Submission and Obedience and strict Fidelity to His Genuine Vicegerent, our Sovereign Lord, the King, whom His Most Gracious Providence hath set over us: To Him ^c we are Commanded to pay Obedience, as

^a Isaiah xi. 9. ^b Isaiah ix. 6. ^c Rom. xiii.
 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Titus iii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13,
 14, 15, 16, 17.

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we value our Eternal Welfare and Salvation; And not to throw our Country into Convulsions with intestine Discord and War, frightening from among us Peace, Justice, Happiness and Safety, and covering our Native Land with Violence and Blood. The Guilt of Murder is most justly reputed to be Unspeakably Great; But it is very Obvious and apparent, that to foment Intestine War and attempt the Ruin of our Sovereign's Kingdoms is an infinitely greater Crime even than that of Murder. It is of all kinds of Parricide by far the most Impious and most Horrible.

The Blessed Jesus hath also taught us to be Sober and Holy in all our Conversation, Humble and Meek, just, merciful and Compassionate to one another; Remembering that we are Brethren, partakers of the same Human Nature, the Children of our Father which is in Heaven, and

Can-

Candidates together of immortal Life. He hath taught us to know that Vengeance is the property of God, and that we must sacrifice all Revenge to Him, if we desire that our own Sins should be forgiven by Him. He hath represented to us that there is an Over-ruling Providence, which directs and disposes all things; And that we are commissioned to have firm Trust and reliance thereon, so long as we on our part are active in the discharge of our Duty. He hath assured us, that God will not lay upon us heavier Trials than we are able to bear, and that our Afflictions (like Storms) will be quickly over, and that Life it self with all its Vanities is of short duration, and to be despised whenever it comes in competition with the practice of Virtue and the Commands of God. And to crown all, He hath brought Life and Immortality to light, and given us a clear

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prospect of the Immense Reward, which the King of all the World will bestow upon His faithful Servants Hereafter, when He admits them into His Heavenly Kingdom to enjoy the Beatific Presence and Happiness for ever.

Moreover the Lord Jesus hath taken away the Distinction that was between the Jews and the Gentiles, and hath given them equal privileges upon the reception of His Faith, and made them equally God's people; According to a memorable prediction of the Prophet Malachi in these words; From the rising of the Sun, even unto the going down of the same, My Name shall be Great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a Pure offering: For My Name shall be Great among the Heathen, says the Lord of Hosts. Malachi the first Chapter and the eleventh Verse. * The Partition-

* Eph. ii. 14.

Wall

Wall therefore, that was between the Jews and the Gentiles, was by the coming of our Saviour broken down ; and the Pale of the Church extended to the uttermost ends of the Earth, even unto all that believe in Jesus, and live an Honest and Virtuous Life. And what Good Man can abstain from Transport of Joy and Cordial Thanks to Almighty God, when he reflects how it hath pleased Him to illuminate this Land, wherein we live, with the Brightest Rays of the Gospel, which was once benighted with the Blackest Ignorance and Idolatry of Paganism ? But now hath He planted among Us a most Pure and Apostolical Church, purged and delivered from the Superstitions and Falsifications of Popery, and holding the Christian Faith in its native Beauty and Lustre. Are we rightly sensible of this Great and Valuable Blessing, which we enjoy ? Or are we ready

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in our hearts, if we were not withheld by Providence, to return to the Egyptian Bondage of the Romish Yoke on the one hand, Or to betray Christianity to Malicious Atheists and Infidels on the other? But, Thanks be to God, there is no danger of Popery, so long as our Most Gracious Sovereign and His Royal House is Safe. And much less let Atheists and Infidels pride themselves in their Wicked attempts upon Religion: For God hath promised, that ^a His Church shall continue to the end of Time it self; As it miraculously overcame the United powers of the World, and triumphed over all resistance in its infancy: And moreover the Nature of the thing it self speaks. For if Atheists and Infidels should ever (which God of His infinite Mercy forbid) throw the Kingdom into Anarchy and Confusion for a season,

^a Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

If

If they should have it in their power to offer violence and suppress Religion for a time, Yet they can never root it out so long as Human Nature continues to be it self, and Reason and Understanding prevail in the World: But it will certainly recoil one time or other with impetuous and irresistible force. But, Brethren, I am persuaded better things of You; I hope there is not among You such a ^a Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood: I hope none of us here present lean either to Popish Superstition, or to Atheism and Infidelity.

Be thus much sufficient upon the first Head of my Discourse: I proceed now to the Second, wherein I am to shew, what our Behaviour ought to be upon the account of the Singular Blessings of this Day in the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

^a Deut. xxix. 18.

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Since in the Nativity of our Saviour upon this Day God hath exhibited his Master-piece of Love and Goodness to Mankind, it is our Duty, you may be sure, to rejoice exceedingly in so inestimable a Benefit. Let therefore all Care and Sorrow about Temporal Concerns, and all anguish and Affliction be hushed to Day, and lost in the Contemplation of the Publick Mercies, which God hath wrought for all His Faithful Servants. Let every Good Man turn away his Thoughts from the object that is disagreeable to him, and look beyond the short term of all his Troubles, and behold with the Eye of Faith the immensely Great Reward, which is reserved for him in the Kingdom of Heaven. For Since this blessed Day was proclaimed by the Holy Angels, ^a Since a Glorious Heavenly Host joined in the Celebration of it, out of mere

^a Luke ii. 13, 14.

Love and Charity towards Mankind, because the Great Work of our Salvation now Commenced, and the Time of our Redemption was come, How much greater cause have we to Rejoice, and to be Thankful in our own behalf? Ought we not to join with Angels and Arch-angels in Glorifying and praising God for His Unspeakable Goodness to the World? To express no Thanks upon this occasion would argue the most Shameful ingratitude that can be. For * even the Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Ass his Master's Crib. Even the irrational Creatures have a Sense of Gratitude. How much more then ought we to be sensibly affected with the Greatest Instance of Divine Goodness to us!

But more especially let us shew our Thankfulness to God for the Birth of His Son by conforming our Lives to the glorious pattern he hath

* Isaiah i. 3.

given us, and by obeying the Precepts of our Divine Legislator. For as He himself is pleased to observe, to what purpose is it to call Him • Lord! Lord! if we will not do the things, which He says unto us? Let us therefore ^b walk worthy of the Vocation wherewith we are Called, and • let him that nameth the Name of Christ depart from all iniquity. Nothing is more fatal and dangerous, and will bring down heavier vengeance upon Men, than to dissemble before God and to profess that we serve Him, while our Actions declare that we acknowledge Him not. It will be far more tolerable in the Day of Judgment for Pagans and Mussulmans, than for Nominal Christians who live Wicked and scandalous Lives in the midst of the light and splendor of the Best Religion in the World. Such Men are a disgrace and scandal to the Holy

^a Luke vi. 46. ^b Eph. iv. 1. ^c 2 Tim. ii. 19.

Faith,

Faith, and as such they will be hereafter treated, who though planted and watered in God's own Garden, are nevertheless Unfruitful of Good Works: If this be our case, then are we, in the language of the Apostle, 'Trees twice dead, and plucked up by the Roots: that is, Whatever we may call ourselves, we are in reality no Christians at all, but are worse than Unenlightned Infidels; It would have been far better for us, if we had never heard of the Gospel. For how shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? If we refuse the Conditions our Redeemer hath procured for us, We are still in our Sins, which are also loaded with this terrible Aggravation, that we trample under foot the Means of Grace, and the Sovereign Mercies of God. Therefore let no Man desperately reject the Infinite Benefit, which is offered him; But turn ye

^a Jude 12.

^b Heb. ii. 3.

unto

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unto God with Thankfulness of Heart and Holiness of Life.

And above all acquire a Peaceable and Forgiving Temper of Mind, and be in perfect Charity among yourselves, and with all Men. For this is the Characteristic and distinguishing Mark, which our Lord and Saviour hath set upon every true Christian. By this (says He) shall all Men know, that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another. St. John xiii. 35. Seek ye therefore Peace and ensue it after the example of the Meek Jesus, and let there be Harmony among You.

And be not capriciously given to Fantastic Innovations of the Faith; Forsake not the Pure and Excellent Established Religion, which our Forefathers sealed with their Blood; and which (to speak what I think without reserve) the Best and most Learned Clergy in the World, your Tillotsons for instance, your Sherlocks,

locks, Souths, and Stillingfleets, seeking the Honour of God, the advancement of Christian Virtue, and the Salvation of Souls, have cultivated and adorned with incessant Study and Labour all their lives. Do not therefore rashly incur the guilt of Schism, and make needless divisions in the Church. If any of us have at any time been imposed upon, and been betrayed into this Fault through any vain fallacy, ignorance, or heedlesness, let them take Warning for the future, and do so no more. But prepare Yourselfes to commemorate the Marvellous Goodness and Condescension of our Saviour with Unanimous devotion in the Holy Communion of the Church; therein making a faithful Covenant with Almighty God, that you will serve Him with the best powers of the Soul, so long as You live.

But in the mean while I trust, that though the Holy Sacrament of the
Lord's

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Lor's Supper • cannot at present be administered on this High Festival, Yet nevertheless You will liberally open your hands according to your ability, to the Poor that are among You: This, I am sure, is in reality much more Noble than to make Sumptuous Entertainments to the Rich that do not need them. Not that I dissuade any Man from rejoicing in the Good things, which God hath blessed him with: But this I say, that to abound in Luxury, and in Charity to be deficient would among Christians be very Preposterous, and much amiss. A Man must be void, I will not say of Religion, but even Humanity it self, who can reflect without commiseration on the case of the Poor, who struggle with Hunger and Cold, Afflictions and distress. Every Christian knows, that ^b our Lord hath

^a Mr. Ringer (being in the Order of Deacons) was not qualified to administer the Holy Sacrament.

^b Matt. xxv. 45.

told

told us, that He resents all unkindness, which we shew them, as tho' it were done to Himself.

I might say a great deal more upon this Subject; I might tell you at large, what Ingratitude and unfaithful dealing Uncharitable Men are guilty of against God, who gives them all they have; And that their prosperity in this World is not immortal, but that they will quickly be called to give a strict account of it. And I might tell You on the other hand, how Certainly God will bless those who obey His Sacred Will, which I hope all who hear me will do. But I shall say no more; for the mention of these Great Truths seems fully sufficient. I shall only beg leave to propose for your imitation the example of Holy Job; Who when
 * God's candle shined upon his head,
 That is, when he enjoyed the Sunshine of Prosperity, was, as we read

* Job xxix. 3.

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of him, ^a Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame, and a Father to the Poor. Therefore (says He) ^b when the Ear heard me, then it blessed me: and when the Eye saw me, it gave witness to me. ^c The blessing of him, that was ready to perish, came upon me; and I caused the Widow's heart to sing for Joy.

God of His infinite Mercy give us grace to consider and practise these things: To whom be rendred and ascribed, as is most due, all Praise, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, both Now and for Evermore. Amen.

^a Job xxix. 15, 16.

^b Job xxix. 11.

^c Job xxix. 13.

Agrestis H Y M N U S.

VECTÆ tenues, ecce, per auras
 Volucres tendunt. Cantus aliæ
 Miscent, viridi fronde latentes.
 Quid me prohibet tentare melos?
 Quid meliorem cum voce vetat
 Jungere mentem?
 Tua, Magne Pater, munera laudo.
 Nam pecus errans, Fons ô vitæ,
 Tu fecisti, túque volantes.
 Et miratur cingens aër,
 Minùs æquoreo stabilis fluctu,
 Fluvioque minùs, se quoque pelli
 Pernice sui remigis ictu.
 Linquere terram Tu namque jubes
 A communi lege solutas;
 Et libratas pendere, velut
 Magnos Vacuum sustinet Orbes.
 Subit interea, subit exhilarans
 Omni mentem a parte voluptas:
 Namque

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Namque vaganti, Pater, indulges
Otia clemens,
Per fragrantès, per ridentes
Artis multæ floribus agros,
Dum pura tuus convexa decens
Explicat æther.

Almi accendis Solis honores,
Qui cuncta, calens igni, foveat;
Spargisque diem lampade Cœli,
Mundùmque beas.

Simile ut nihil est, Æterne, tui!

Cujus servant omnia nutum,
Solem mavis seu stare loco,
Seu perpetuos volvis in orbes,
Vires nullo fine ministrans;
Tacitéque rotas turbine summo.

Moriture audi, sensus adhibe,
Quisquis non es Rationis egens.

Noctem alternet, moveátque diem,
Cursûque ruat dissimulato,

Quem rere, Globus: Quodcunque
Pater

Vult Omnipotens, ecce, peractum
est.

Is, consilio condita magno,

Regit

Regit a primis omnia seclis.
Jam, ne pereat præclara mihi
Rerum facies, binas dextræ
Servas artes, bonus usque, tuæ,
Mirande Opifex! ipsâque magis
Charum vitâ luminis usum.
Te per eundem, stringens aures,
Sonus hauritur, recreâtque melos.
Laudabo libens tua, dum vivam,
(Neque finis erit) Numina Semper.

F I N I S.





Some of the chief Errors of the Press.

PAGE 55. line 21. read, as says our. p. 129.
l. 19. for, ^a Prize r. ^b Prize. p. 133. l. 9.
f. ^b for r. ^d for. p. 137. l. 20. f. ^a by r. ^b by.
p. 144. l. 7. r. in Scripture. p. 163. l. 5. f.
he may be sure r. we may be sure. p. 173.
l. 12. r. extremely pernicious. p. 178. l. 15.
r. in Heaven. p. 184. l. 11. r. of Righteous-
ness. p. 185. l. 14. dele, and the Wisdom.
p. 228. l. 13. f. and you might, r. you might.
p. 232. l. 5. r. Habit holds. p. 244. last l.
f. seves r. selves. p. 319. l. 18. f. altogether
r. together.

